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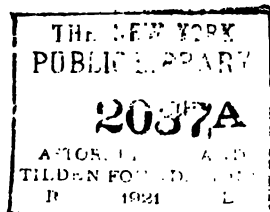
HE THAT IS WITHOUT SIN

By

IVAN TREPOFF

NEW YORK
THE COSMOPOLITAN PRESS

1911



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2037A

HE THAT IS WITHOUT SIN

CHAPTER I

KATHERINE BESSAM had poured tea and said polite if not always truthful things to her visitors for two hours. She had done this sort of thing every second Thursday for several seasons. When the last guest had disappeared she sat down in a large thickly upholstered chair and yawned. Her maid came in.

"Mr. Stratford to see you," she said. "James asked me to tell you."

"Let him come in."

She patted her light brown hair with a heavy, well-groomed hand. An oblong emerald set in diamonds ornamented the ring finger. Her sleeve slipped back from a white, somewhat thick, forearm. A snake bracelet with a large diamond in its head and ruby eyes clasped the arm above the elbow. The head protruded from the short sleeve, the tail only being visible when she raised her hand.

"You are late," she said to Stratford as he came in. Her voice was quiet and clear, and not unpleasant. "It's near six o'clock, and I dine early to-night. I mention this as your visit will have to be short, and I am sorry for that."

She had advanced toward him and had taken him by the hand.

Stratford frowned. He was in a hurry himself, but wanted that fact to be the determining consideration rather than the inclination of his hostess.

"That is quite in accord with my own intent," he answered quickly. "I am going to talk to a lot of workingmen at seven-thirty, and want my digestion quiet before I begin. I shall get a bite soon. How are you?"

She laughed.

"I love that in you. You have forgotten the opera. You were to drop in. I am going to sit in the Hastings box."

"No, I have not forgotten it. That's why I am here. I can't make it. Cosgrove wants to have a talk with me to-night and that will make it too late for the opera. You will have to excuse me."

"Of course I will, Jim." There was a little note of regret in her voice. "He looks so stunning in his evening clothes," she thought.

"So you are going on with your political game," she said aloud. "The Stratfords gone before will turn in their graves. Your respected uncle, Ralph Hersey, doesn't approve of it, that I know. Can't say that I admire it myself. I have always associated you with something better than hobnobbing with a lot of Tammany heelers."

Stratford remained silent. She sat down now and rested one arm over the edge of the arm of the chair,

toying with a diamond pendant suspended from a thin platinum chain fastened about her neck. The pose was not half bad. Stratford let his eyes pass over the full, well-made figure. She had strong shoulders, ample hips, large dark brown eyes, and heavy eyebrows which quite met over the bridge of a straight though somewhat long nose. The mouth was a trifle feeble, though this was only apparent when her lips moved. It suggested lack of co-ordination rather than volitional feebleness. On the whole the general effect conveyed the idea of strength, tempered perhaps by a tendency toward indolence.

"You are not in a mood to defend your views to-day," she added, as Stratford still remained silent. "Won't you sit down?"

"No, thanks," he answered. "I might find my theme attractive enough to interfere with our several responsibilities. I hope you will enjoy the opera."

He turned to the window, drawing aside the curtain. "It had begun to drizzle when I came in."

He made a formidable outline against the dying daylight, and he stood for some time watching the glittering limousines and broughams filing by on the wet asphalt.

She rose suddenly and stepped to his side. He towered quite over her head tall as she was.

"I do not wish to offend you, Jim," she said almost meekly.

"I did not expect to find a response in you for what I am doing," he began. He turned to the center of

the room. "It is not consistent with the luxury here. You see the question of life only from the viewpoint of your rugs, hangings, bronzes; your teas, dinners, the opera, and all that goes with that sort of thing. I had much the same notion. My idea of the responsibility of a citizen of our great republic was limited to criticising the uniform of the street sweeper who scraped the asphalt in front of my club windows. It is viewing a problem from too great a distance that obliterates the lines, and only when you get close to it can you see how irregular the entire outline is. But I have been over this before. I know it bores you. I must be on." He held out his hand. "Good-by. Pat your palm once for me when the prima donna reaches her high note."

"He has one of those attacks of being the savior of the universe," she muttered as Stratford passed out. "I suppose this notion comes into men's lives. If history is to be believed, he will recover."

She glanced at the clock; the hands showed six. "Parsifal" was being done that night, which meant an early dinner and the crash of Wagner until midnight. She sighed a lazy sigh and mounted to her room. The maid brushed her hair, a practice women and cats take great delight in. The mirror in the toilet table showed a fair, well moulded face. A few wrinkles, portentous of impending maturity, showed near the corners of the eyes. One gross wrinkle ran transversely across the forehead. She bent closer to the glass and caught its ungently accurate focus. The

skin near the angle of the nose showed little pits, very minute, yet never seen before thirty.

"No use, Katherine," she addressed herself in the mirror, "you are no longer a bud." She smiled a bit defiantly and tossed her head. "Well, he's brushing thirty-seven closely enough himself. He will be more attractive at forty-five. It's different with a woman. If he would let that wild notion about politics alone it would be all right. I think he will, in the end. If he persists, Hersey'll cut him off, and that means comparative poverty and a stimulated pride. I would never get him then."


The maid finished her hair. "The gray dress with the black net, Marie," she ordered.

Katherine Bessam was the only child of John Bessam, who had made "his pile" in steel. Bessam had given his daughter whatever she wanted, and she had wanted most things. She had received the series of proposals which come to all daughters of wealthy men. None of them had suited her, least of all those from titled foreigners. The old man did not like titles of themselves. He thought that many men with titles were worth while, but that none who were worth while would gun for his daughter, and "the rest didn't count."

Katherine, with her father's discernment, felt much the same way about titled men. She was not a love inspiring woman and, strange as it may seem, was aware of it. She looked always as though just turned out of a maid's hands, but lacked that unknown subtle

quality which holds men, and perhaps explains why unattractive women hold their husbands at times in the face of the apparent allure of others. She suggested maternity in the abstract, and logically should be the mother of a fine lot of youngsters, yet she did not stimulate thought of the causative factors in reproduction. She was capable of a more or less attractive blush, but did not look as though she would grow pale with desire. Men who looked at the superficial wanted to marry her. The others married women whose eyes glistened when they rolled up a shirt sleeve to tighten a brake band on a motor hub. Men who had done things preferred women who had followed their speeches, or their writings, or perhaps their financial or commercial efforts. Katherine was too innate an egotist to bother with matters of that sort, though this was a pity, for she was not without brains. Stratford had appealed to her as a dilettante.

Jim Stratford was an orphan, brought up by his mother's brother, Ralph Hersey, a hard-headed financier who had retired from active work and tolerated his nephew because he was 'Henrietta's son.' It did not bother Stratford that his uncle was more interested in his racing stable than anything else. Incidentally Hersey won almost every big stake he raced for, and was one of the few men who made racing pay. Probably because he did not care whether he won or not. He had no other heir than



Jim Stratford, and did not 'care a damn what Jim did so long as he behaved with reasonable caution and did not involve the family name in scandal.'

Jim Stratford had gone through Yale and later qualified for the bar. He had a desk in a law office, but didn't practice much. Once in a while he tried a case to keep his hand in, but most of the time he did nothing beyond golf, drive a runabout motor, and loll on the veranda of a fashionable hotel in summer. He had an income of a few thousands dollars from his mother's estate, and Hersey allowed him ten thousand a year "to keep up a standard," as Hersey put it. "I want him to keep up appearances," he told his attorney when making the necessary arrangements. "But he'll have to wait until I'm dead before he does any fancy stunts."

Stratford passed out into the drizzle. The Bes-sam home faced the Park, making quite a formidable display among the houses on "Millionaire's Row," with its granite facade and towering chimneys. A passing taximeter took him quickly to the Hersey home on Murray Hill. The house, a roomy, old-fashioned affair of red brick and brown stone trimmings, faced Madison Avenue. The butler let him in.

"Mr. Hersey is in," he said as he took Stratford's coat and hat. Stratford went to his room, washed, and put on a tweed business suit. "My audience won't like too much shirt front," he muttered smilingly. As he passed the library Hersey's voice called, "Come in, Jim. I want to talk to you for a minute."

Stratford stepped into the library, a large darkly furnished room facing the street. A deep red carpet covered the floor. The ceiling was squared off with dark mahogany rafters, the spaces being filled up with stippled plaster touched with bronze. The bronze edges caught the flicker from a cannel coal fire blazing in the open fireplace. A large oblong mahogany writing table with thick legs and heavy brass draw pulls stood in the middle of the room. The chairs were alternately dark velour and tapestry. Hersey sat in a big deep copper-colored armchair, his handsome gray head making a striking contrast to its back, which reached well beyond his figure. He was in evening clothes and smoked a cigarette. A small table with a half empty cocktail glass stood at his elbow. His feet came quite close to the brass wire screen in front of the flames.

He removed his eyeglasses as Stratford came in and looked up, directing a pair of deep set gray eyes overshadowed by bushy eyebrows toward the younger man. He was clean-shaven, and as Stratford advanced into the room he smiled, revealing strong, slightly yellow teeth, the front two of which overlapped a trifle. The lips were full and red, quite in accord with the florid skin, though this was in contrast to the slender, strongly built figure.

He laid his paper down on the edge of the table, from which it slid to the floor. He kicked it aside, as he did not believe in order beyond what might be necessary to his own immediate convenience, and

left the paper for someone else to pick up. Stratford made no attempt to do so. The men were conservers of energy for purposes which interested them, though either would have picked up the paper to consult it for some immediate purpose.

"I see by the paper that you are going to address a lot of workingmen to-night," Hersey said. "Onshi tells me you have ordered something to be served ahead of dinner." He spoke like a man who stated things which thereafter were never questioned.

"Both the papers and Onshi are right, Hersey," Stratford answered.

He never called the elder man 'Uncle Ralph.' Hersey didn't want him to. He was called 'Hersey' by everyone in Wall Street, from the messenger boys up. It was part of his pose. "Kings have to stand for being called by their first names—there is only one Hersey," he would say when someone commented upon the fact. "I don't want any maudlin sentiment about it."

Hersey frowned a little at Stratford's answer, and tapped his front teeth with his eyeglasses.

"Of course you know I don't like this proposition," he went on. "That gang of law-breakers called the Tammany chiefs has robbed everybody, of everything, they could get their hands on for years. I hate to have you rub against them. You probably think you can reform them; but you can't do it. They will engulf you in their own filth. I realize that you have enough Hersey in you to do as you please, irre-

spective of my views. I want to be fair with you. If you get into any rotten mess I'll not smudge myself helping you out of it. With that understanding, I do nothing to deter you."

Stratford lighted a cigarette and seated himself on the edge of the mahogany writing table. He waited for Hersey to go on.

"That Cosgrove," Hersey continued, after finishing his cocktail, "was the go between in the tunnel game. Bled the whole crowd, and bled them thoroughly. I'll say this much for him—he played hard and for a big stake. He's only behind you now to see what his gang can get out of it when you pull off something. I would suggest that you refrain from intimacy with that ginmill keeper. He's a bad egg."

"Well, you used him when you wanted to get that railroad terminal affair through," Stratford replied laughingly. He flipped his cigarette ashes on the floor. "I'm trying to inspire my people to elect men to office who do not need to be handled in that way."

"There is no other way," Hersey broke in sharply. "Hundreds have tried before you. I handled this proposition through a channel—I didn't come into contact with the man myself, as you are doing. It was for the public good, and I accepted the conditions, as any man would who has been entrusted with financing a great proposition. It's better to pay these cattle than to eat with them. However, do as you please, but remember what I said. Bessam is dining

with me to-night. Katherine is going to the opera. Thank God I can have a quiet evening without a lot of jabbering women about. Good-night."

Stratford laughed.

"Good-night. I'll take the odium of what I do. I'm tired of hanging around waiting for you to die. Aside from the ignominy of being in this position, I don't want you to die just yet. I cling to the thought of showing you something; and, beyond this, the idea that I have you to say disagreeable things to me is attractive. It gives me an opportunity of increasing my vocabulary in answering you." He jumped to the floor. "Dine old Bessam well. He's a gastronomic octopus," he added, as he walked briskly out of the room.

Hersey heard him whistling as he went along the street.

"He'll do as he damned pleases, anyway," he muttered. "It's a bit annoying. However, that's no reason why I shouldn't take another drink." He rang the bell and ordered it.

Technically, Hersey was a drunkard. He drank three or four cocktails before dinner every day, a habit carried over from the days when he stood against the bar of a fashionable men's café after the exchange closed, working up some deal for the next day. He regarded the well appointed bar, with its Circassian walnut furnishings and expensive oil paintings, as quite distinct from Cosgrove's ginmill. He did not seem to see that the difference was largely to-

pographical. He assumed that the rum was better in the place where he drank it, a conception in which he was right.

He restricted himself to a pint of French champagne at dinner. He had at least enough education in alcoholism not to mix his wines—a refinement into which men graduate after years of conformation to the tastes of others. After dinner he sipped a rare brandy, which did not make his eyes water, though he did not dilute it. If a late appointment kept him from taking his cocktail, he became irascible and disagreeable, the cause of which he did not realize until he had “caught up” with several cocktails, a certain sign of the so-called subconscious alcoholic. He was distinctly free from subterfuge and deceit, and everything he did he did openly, except when some one’s else interests were conserved by silence or concealment.

A committee appointed by the Governor of the State to investigate the Stock Exchange had asked for Hersey’s testimony in connection with several great deals which savored of questionable methods of financing. He sent for his attorney.

“Have these fellows a legal right to ask me about my affairs?” he asked the dapper little counsel.

“I saw by the papers that you had been invited to appear before them,” the attorney answered. “I looked into the matter anticipating your question. No; they cannot compel your attendance.”

“Thank you. Have a drink.”

The next day he dictated a letter to the committee.

"I fear that I am not in a position to teach your committee anything," it said. "You have my best wishes and I also take the liberty of expressing the hope that you will succeed in reforming the universe.

"HERSEY."

The chairman of the committee, an elderly merchant who had never interested himself in anything beyond his commercial problems, read the letter aloud.

"We ought to thank him for not putting the word *your* in italics. There is a term for what I think of him. However, I suppose I have no right to say disagreeable things about a man's progenitors."

Onshi brought in the cocktail. "Mr. Bessam drinks burgundy in his champagne," Hersey said. "That means cold burgundy. These damned Pennsylvania smelters never will learn how to drink."

He muttered the last sentence. An enormous Siberian wolfhound walked slowly into the room. He barely wagged his tail and put his long, pointed muzzle on Hersey's knee. Hersey scratched the top of the dog's head, which attention was acknowledged by a wider waving of his tail.

"You are getting on in life, Mutzky," Hersey said, looking into the dog's slightly clouded eyes. "Time is an exacting tyrant."

Hersey had been a widower for many years. His wife died in Rome, where she had gone to splurge her husband's millions. She was a sweet gentle creature, with some social ambitions. These had been effectually restrained by Hersey, who regarded conventional social indulgences as an infernal bore. Then, too, the fashionable set did not like him. His arrogance was responsible for this. The hard-headed aristocrats did not admire his financial methods, and as he had no sympathy with struggling artists and literary persons, his sphere was small. In it, however, he dominated. His wife gradually accepted the situation after exhausting the various artful measures even sweet, gentle women have when they wish to achieve something. In the end she went to Italy. That was over twenty years ago. She had never borne him an heir. This may have influenced Hersey in his attitude, though he never made any illusion to his disappointment, if he felt any. It was true that he might have married again, for he was only forty-three when his wife died. For some reason he could not explain, even to himself, he never did. He wired to Rome to have his wife's remains sent home. When they came he put them away, and to all appearances placed the entire matter behind him.

The wolfhound yawned, showing a row of cruel sharp teeth.

"Tired already, Mutzky," he said. "Well, go to bed."

The dog walked slowly out. Hersey had had him for ten years. He had been given to him by a stableman who came over from Europe with a string of horses. It was the first pet he had ever had. When the pup opened his long sharp mouth Hersey had remarked: "I'll take him. He looks as though he could bite a thick-necked boar in two. I'll call him Mutzky. I suppose he would object to being called by that distortion of the Tsar's beautiful euphonious tongue, but it's better than naming him Vladimir and tying a pink ribbon on his collar."

The dog wintered with him. The rest of the year Hersey had him go on the circuit with his horses. No other dog stayed about during that time. That's why Hersey kept Mutzky. He had seen him kill an English mastiff in a field near the race track when Mutzky was eleven months old. Several grooms had tried to separate the dogs, as Mutzky was hacking chunks of meat out of the mastiff's neck. The mastiff fought with desperate persistence. Hersey came along, mounted on a heavily built bay horse out of a French coach mare by a steeple chaser. "Let them fight it out," Hersey yelled, as he pulled up beside the fence. "If Mutzky quits, shoot him."

A few minutes later Mutzky jumped the fence into the road and rubbed his bloody muzzle against Hersey's riding boot. From that day on Hersey had the dog around him as much as was feasible.

Stratford petted the brute, but never obtained the least recognition from him. Hersey only had to raise

his voice to make the dog look up. Each evening the dog waited at the front door for Hersey, to get a brief pat on the head and an order to "get out." When Hersey came into the library for his obligatory cocktail and the evening paper the dog appeared from some dark corner and went through the same ceremony—a pat on the head, a few words, and an order to leave. Once he disobeyed the order. Hersey promptly kicked him down the stairway. Ever after that he obeyed at once. The butler had slapped a towel at the dog one evening when dinner was late and the dog got in his way. He was destined to carry a scar on his wrist for the rest of his days.

John Bessam came in unannounced. The men had been friends for many years.

"Hello, Hersey!" he said in a deep powerful voice which came from a fat chin. He was a heavily built man, quite as tall as Hersey, but had an enormous paunch, a bald head, and square cut carefully groomed gray beard.

Hersey did not get up.

"Have a drink, Bessam," Hersey said, without farther ceremony. "Press that button over there. You know where it is—you ought to find it in the dark, you infernal old drunkard," he added as Bessam looked confused for an instant.

Bessam laughed a deep-toned hearty laugh, promptly disassociating the relationship of his waistcoat and his trousers.

"I want a drink of rye whisky diluted with carbonic

water. The eminent chemist to whom I pay a ridiculous salary for digging into smelting by-products, tells me that that's the most healthful—or at least the least harmful booze in the world."

"I regard drinking a matter of taste, not of chemistry," Hersey answered with a laugh. "It's only a question of alcohol, after all. But fake yourself along, if you like."

Onshi came in.

"Onshi," Hersey said to the Japanese boy, "bring Mr. Bessam his favorite drink—a pint of champagne in a celery glass." Then to Bessam: "If I didn't know you so well you'd have to drink the whisky, after all. Sit down, for God's sake, and stop sticking that big belly of yours into my face."

Bessam lighted a cigar.

"That's it," Hersey went on. "You'll suck on the end of a big cigar before dinner. You wouldn't smoke a cigarette—afraid you might be regarded as possessed of certain refinements of taste. Well, go ahead. You are also invited to spit on my carpet. You'll do it anyway. Tell me about yourself."

"Hersey," Bessam began slowly, after engulfing the pint and wiping his beard with a dainty napkin, "there are certain attractive qualities in you which I am aware of, even though they are not always readily discernible. It is also true that on the whole you are a damned ruffian. You have not the redeeming feature of being an uncut diamond; on the contrary, your brutalities are not the result of lack of edu-

cation, nor because you haven't rubbed against the world. They are refined, premeditated impudence,—perhaps warranted at times; but in some instances they are very offensive. I have a feeling that unless you dine me well to-night I'll be tempted to punch your head."

"Fine!" Hersey laughed back. "Fine! Good for you. Still got the old fight in you. I love it. I was actually afraid I couldn't get a rise out of you. You have been gradually degenerating into a milk-sop. Too much loafing around clubs. I apologize. That infernal fool Jim has irritated me. Come on down to dinner. Do you want another pint?"

"No, thank you. Not yet," Bessam answered.

Hersey rose and put his hand on his guest's shoulder. A tense muscle stood out in Bessam's neck in astonishing contrast to the fat chin as he turned his head to blow the cigar smoke from his mouth. It made a singular accord with the muscle near Hersey's thumb, as his hand rested on the black cloth of Bessam's coat. One could conceive of the powerful hand crushing the tense muscle against the windpipe. Hersey had regained his pose. He stood aside as Bessam passed out and followed the portly steel man down into the dining-room. A low electric chandelier illuminated a well dressed table. Bessam seated himself with a grunt and tucked his napkin into his collar. Hersey slid quietly into his chair.

"Is Jim worrying you, Hersey?" Bessam asked, after sliding a dozen large oysters down his gullet.

"Jim of himself isn't. His getting into that set annoys me. He will get tied up so that it will be difficult to handle him after a time."

"Oh, bosh! He'll get tired of it soon enough. I fancy Katherine will wean him away from it. We all have our wild notions at some time in life. I guess Kate is stuck on the fellow, and that helps. Don't worry your head. That terrapin isn't half bad. Open another bottle, you know you like to show me how you can do it with the wire only half loosened. I'll tell you a story about a fool who tried to beat me at a steel rail game for the Western Road. Let those young people fight their own game out."

Bessam tucked his napkin back into his collar, for it had slipped down while he was talking, and it was necessary for him to keep his shirt presentable as he had promised to call for Katherine after the opera.

Hersey listened to Bessam's tale with polite attention, though his guest realized that Hersey was thinking of something else.

"Come, Hersey," he said suddenly, "what's on your mind? Out with it. We have been friends long enough not to stand on ceremony. I'll tackle this duck while you tell me about it."

"I'll tell you, Bessam," Hersey began slowly. "As I grow older I feel at times a peculiar regret at things which previously I dismissed from my mind. I do not know whether, like the morals of King Solomon, this is the outcome of exhaustion or not." Hersey smiled a peculiar, almost wistful smile. His voice

had a note in it which made Bessam poise a luscious piece of duck midway to his mouth and put it down again on his plate. Hersey lighted a cigarette. Bessam went on with his duck. "Stratford's mother, my sister," Hersey resumed,—“you remember her of course,—did not have a particularly happy life. Her husband had many characteristics in common with myself. He was a positive, dominating sort of chap, full of brilliant ideas, but lacked the necessary application to accomplish financial success. This made him morose and irritable at times. Henrietta was very patient with him, however, and brought up Jim as best she could. She was the only immediate relative I had. You did not know her husband. Well, when he died she came to live with me. She never exacted anything from me with respect to Jim. I fancy she knew me well enough to feel this unnecessary. I have been wondering since her boy went out to-night what she would do were she alive. I do not know. I never looked into her heart. I imagine few ever did.”

Hersey paused again.

“I don't want any salad,” Bessam said, as he pushed his plate toward the center of the table and emptied his glass.

“Serve coffee in the library, Onshi,” Hersey ordered, with a momentary remission into his usual curt method of expression. “Mr. Bessam will burn his brandy.”

He led the way to the library, standing aside to let Bessam's ponderous body precede him. The men

sat for some time in silence, watching the fire in the grate lick up the fuel and send hungry flames darting out toward the polished fender.

Bessam knew his host too well to break the silence, and waited patiently with his hands folded over his paunch whilst he puffed industriously at a fat black cigar.

"After all," Hersey began presently, "all human effort is perhaps only a question of sphere. I think, Bessam, old sport, I'll let Jim try it out, though I fancy my approval is not essential to him. He will need money. Nothing can be done without money. I do not often burden you with my affairs, Bessam, but, frankly, what do you think?"

The gentle note in Hersey's voice died as he asked the question, and he looked straight into Bessam's eyes.

Bessam took the cigar out of his mouth and spat into the fire.

"I feel complimented at you asking me," he answered. "I also feel that, after fighting with you at stated intervals for thirty odd years, you won't take my advice unless it agrees with your own notions. However, I'll give it. Yes, let him go on. Help him with your filthy dough, and if he wins out you'll find that he will rise above his beginning."

"That's what I'm afraid of," Hersey put in. "As I told you, his father was an impracticable man, and his mother a gentle creature. He may, however, have enough Hersey in him to make good in the end. Yet, too, he must be somewhat of an idealist to want

to begin the way he's going at it. I fancy I could buy him a nomination, yet I feel certain he would not consent to that, and there is no way of concealing it from him."

"I wonder how Katherine will feel about the thing," Bessam said thoughtfully.

"What!" Hersey spat out with some heat. "Katherine! Good God, man, she'll do as he says! She'll follow where he leads, like all women."

Bessam laughed his hearty deep toned laugh.

"Hersey, old man, you do not know it, and if you do you won't admit it, yet there are times when women lead men. Well, we'll see. One thing I want to say right now. Don't be stingy with the boy, or I'll slip him a fat wad myself." And Bessam got up and lighted a fine fresh six inch cigar.

"If you do, you'll expect him to influence legislation for the benefit of your damned corporation," came Hersey's characteristic retort.

The two men sat for some time reviewing the possibilities. Bessam continued on with his champagne, of which he imbibed several bottles, whilst Hersey sipped his brandy. Hersey decided to take the matter up with Stratford in the morning, and when it came time for Bessam to go, went with him to the front door and helped him on with his overcoat, a courtesy Bessam acknowledged by poking fun at his host at the way he did it, and hurried down to his waiting limousine with his big paunch shaking like a bread batter.

CHAPTER II

STRATFORD, in the downtown hall, had just finished his speech, which was followed by a prolonged demonstration of approval on the part of his hearers. His address was of the usual kind employed by men who were looking for recognition,—the workingman dishonestly led and vows of betterment. This evening he had devoted to proving that municipal ownership of gas, heat, and electric light plants was a necessity. He had canvassed the situation very carefully, and knew what he was talking about. In addition to this, he did not confuse his audience with a large number of tables, but put his proposition in plain and easily understood language. He was in no sense an orator, but fascinated his listeners with a peculiar direct method of address and an unusually attractive personality. He had occupied the platform for over an hour in the close stuffy meeting hall, and the chill night air felt good as he emerged from the building. It was raining quite hard, one of those penetrating February rain-storms, and he turned up the collar of his coat and trudged in an easterly direction. At Third avenue he turned south, passed the towering Cooper Institute, with its glowing windows, and on to the Bowery. A few streets farther on he turned east again, and at the next street crossing turned into the side door of a brilliantly illuminated corner “sa-

loon." The place was decorated with a raised wall paper and cherry woodwork. The floor was made up of tiny circular tiles covered with a thin layer of sawdust, which was destined to catch the moisture of wet shoes on rainy nights. The resort was quite deserted, for the hour was yet early, and real active business did not begin until midnight. Two clean, well-built young men in sack coats and aprons stood quietly waiting near a glass door through which a well appointed bar was visible. Several men in white linen jackets and carefully brushed hair were serving drinks to a line of men standing against the bar.

Stratford bowed to the two waiters and passed into a small compartment isolated from the main room by a partition which did not quite reach to the ceiling. One corner of the room was occupied by a small raised platform on which was a quartette of negro musicians waiting for the place to fill up. As Stratford opened the door of the compartment a man in a black suit, which set off heavy powerful shoulders crowned with a thick neck and gray hair, turned from a small desk at which he was writing.

"Hello, Cosgrove!" Stratford said pleasantly.

Cosgrove smiled, showing white, large, regular teeth between clean shaven lips. He had a full wide mouth, heavy dark eyebrows, deep set gray eyes, a low wide forehead, and a heavy chin with an indentation in its middle. The left ear was strangely mutilated and the bridge of the nose slightly sunken. The chin and upper lip had a bluish tinge. His coat was

buttoned and showed a soft white shirt, low collar and a narrow black tie at the neck.

"Come in, Stratford," he said, in a low pitched not unpleasant voice, which was quite in accord with the semi-clerical garb he wore. He looked like a clergyman, an appearance not uncommon among prize fighters. As he reached out his hand a small tattoo mark near the wrist showed as his coat sleeve pulled away. "I suppose you pulled it off all right to-night," he said. "You'll force recognition of your efforts in the end. Stick to it. You'll make a hit yet. When you get your nomination, we'll see you get the votes, sure enough. We know where they grow," he added, with a faint smile.

Stratford hung his hat on a brass hanger near the door and sat down beside a small mahogany top table which stood in the corner of the room.

Cosgrove pressed a button near his elbow. A waiter appeared.

"Bring a pint of brut," Cosgrove said to the waiter. "Two glasses, and have the wine cold. You will enjoy a cold drink after your speech," he added, turning to Stratford.

"I *am* a bit tired," Stratford answered. He unbuttoned his coat and crossed his legs a trifle slowly.

"Tell me, Stratford," Cosgrove asked, "is that sweet tempered uncle of yours as rebellious as ever?"

"Oh, yes. He doesn't say much, but he has made his position quite clear to me. I'm a bit sorry for it, too, for he's a strong man to have behind you."

"I agree with you," Cosgrove said, with a little smile. "But we can't help it. He'll feel differently when you make a hit in Albany. He'll be proud of you then. Men like him always like success of any kind. He'll come around all right."

The waiter brought the wine and served it with a steady hand. Waiters in dives as a rule do not drink. They are selected for that reason. The four-o'clock-in-the-morning fight requires a cool head.

"It's strange," Cosgrove began as he reached for his glass, "how two men so differently situated can find a common ground of interest. You see my early education crops out in more or less decent language at times. I fancy perhaps the direct way you went at that little legal problem I put up to you made me want to know you better. I remembered that old Hersey had a nephew who was a lawyer. I had some dealing with Hersey. He is a keen fellow. He handled that railroad terminal matter in good shape. I imagined his nephew would be about as clever, though I did not reckon on your straightforwardness, if there is such a thing. Well, you did the job well. There is such a thing as straight play in politics, the press notwithstanding."

"I couldn't have done anything with your proposition unless it was straight. You should think of that too," Stratford answered.

"That's why I wanted you to take it up. If it had been crooked, I'd have had a grafter handle it, and won out in the usual way. However, that is not what

I want to talk to you about. I saw the chief up at the 'Hall' to-day. He is willing to accept your nomination for the Assembly if I can handle this end of the proposition. Of course that's easy. That means election sure. I wanted you to know it soon, so I thought I'd ask you to drop in. That's what accounts for this bottle of 'fizz'. You know I don't drink much."

Stratford raised his glass.

"Thank you, old man. Here's to a successful outcome."

The men rose. They were quite on a level. Cosgrove showed greater thickness, but this was not obtrusively manifest. He was heavier than Stratford, but had the extra weight on all over him—in the thickness of the shoulder, the neck, the thigh, and the calf, which bowed out a trifle. Yet they would have been formidable antagonists if pitted against each other in a physical contest. Stratford was more slender, yet showed stamina in the breadth of chest and length of limb. Stratford's Adam's apple showed more plainly than that of Cosgrove and his chin was lighter, though well outlined. Cosgrove grasped his glass at the bowl, which he encircled with his thick fingers. Stratford lifted his with two fingers and steadied it with the little finger against the base.

"Is Mr. Cosgrove in?" came a voice from the adjacent room.

The voice was that of a woman, singularly clear,

being carried beyond the partition with distinctness, yet was not high in pitch nor of great volume.

"That's Mildred Fuller," Cosgrove said as he placed his glass on the table. "I've told you about her. What the devil does she bother me for now? I'll tell Mike to say I'm busy."

He started toward the door.

"No, indeed; don't send her away," Stratford put in hastily. "She was befriended by McNulty, was she not—the one that died recently? Perhaps she is in need of help. I'll go."

"Indeed she is not in need of help," Cosgrove answered. "Mac left her a good big pile of money. No; she probably wants someone to talk to her. You know McNulty and I were great friends. Maybe you'd like to meet her. She isn't half bad." Cosgrove laughed. "Look out, though, my boy, she's a stunner. We must not get you tied up with a dame like that, just now."

The waiter called 'Mike' here appeared at the door.

"Miss Fuller wants you, Mr. Cosgrove," he said.

"Tell her to come in."

The woman came in, but drew back when she saw Cosgrove had a visitor.

"Don't be alarmed, Miss Fuller," Cosgrove said pleasantly. "I want you to meet Mr. Stratford. He's going to be the next Assemblyman from our district."

"He looks as though he'd make a good one," the

woman answered, looking keenly at Stratford. She wore an olive drab rain coat trimmed with green and a soft Alpine hat also trimmed with a broad green ribbon. The hat was placed jauntily on thick dark brown hair and was held in place with a green topped pin. The face was handsome enough, a white low broad forehead, strongly marked eyebrows, clear dark eyes, a straight nose somewhat wide at the nostrils, though these were thin and well arched. The cheek was smooth and the mouth full and well formed. She smiled into Stratford's eyes, displaying a row of glistening, white teeth. She had a green veil about her neck, the bow of which rested against a round slightly dimpled chin.

"I am glad to see you, madame," Stratford said, bowing a trifle stiffly. "Mr. Cosgrove has told me of you."

He looked for some evidence of mourning, but none appeared unless the edge of a black skirt showing beneath the rain coat was indicative in this connection.

"I see you've had a pint," she said to Cosgrove, flashing a quick look at him. "I'll buy a pint myself. This rain makes me blue."

She shook her shoulders, dislodging some rain drops. She had no umbrella and the green hat was quite wet. Pearls of rain water had lodged in the light mesh of the veil about her neck and glistened in the electric light. She sat down now on a chair near the door and lifted her skirt preliminary to delving

into her stocking, from which she withdrew a roll of bills.

Stratford frowned. The girl looked up in time to see it, and looked inquiringly at Cosgrove. Cosgrove laughed.

"I guess not, my dear," he said. "Mr. Stratford is not initiated into the habits of women who buy wine."

"If madame will do me the honor," Stratford said with some confusion, "I will be glad to order her something to drink."

"Go as far as you like, old sport," she said smilingly. But there was a slight hesitation in her voice and she fingered the roll of bills in an embarrassed sort of way.

"Put up your wad," Cosgrove said, still laughing. "You display a sufficiently well made leg in doing so to compensate even my friend's annoyance."

The girl turned toward the partition as she replaced the money, a precaution she had not taken during its extraction. Stratford ordered the wine. The girl seated herself on the edge of a chair near the door.

"Let me help you off with your coat," Stratford volunteered.

The girl rose, unbuttoning the rain coat. Stratford held the garment, from which she twisted with a peculiar accurate movement. She had on a dead black gown without any trimming whatever, and wore a diamond fleur de lys at her throat. The

sleeves of the gown were short, and as the rain coat came off her gloves slid down to the wrists, revealing white smooth round forearms, one of which was encircled by a plain gold band. She took the gloves off, now exposing well groomed hands with tapering fingers, which were devoid of jewelry. As she raised her hand to adjust her hat the skin near the elbow made a slight crease, enhancing the whiteness of the upper arm.

"Still unattached, Mildred?" Cosgrove asked suddenly.

The silence had become embarrassing.

"I guess nobody wants me," the girl answered thoughtfully. "You see, I'm getting on in life. I'll be twenty-eight next month. I guess I might dig up a fat Jew," she added, with a little laugh, "but that means a lot of uncomfortable hours. The game isn't worth the gamble. Guess I'll go into a convent."

She smiled at Stratford when she said it.

"Good Lord!" Cosgrove answered; "a woman doesn't know herself until she's thirty, and you are old enough to quit this irresponsible way of living, anyway. You were never fitted for it."

The waiter brought the wine. The girl gulped hers down at a draught.

"Ginger! I needed that," she cried gayly.

She blew her breath across her lips like a child who has eaten an ice too rapidly.

Stratford sipped a little at his glass and set it down. He reached now for the bottle and refilled

the girl's glass. Cosgrove barely touched his glass to his lips. The girl swallowed the second glass.

"The devil," she said with an impatient stamp of a remarkably well booted foot, "when you're in Rome do as the Romans do!" She sprang up and pressed the button. "Bring a quart," she said to the waiter. "My money is good here, isn't it, Cosgrove? Your friend ought to be a good sport." She flounced about and extracted the roll of bills from her stocking with astonishing rapidity.

"Oh, let her have her way," Cosgrove put in.

The waiter brought the wine and the girl handed over a bill.

"You will allow me," Stratford said firmly. "I am not in the habit of allowing women to pay for what I drink. You are most respectfully invited to drink what you wish. The financial aspects of the situation will be taken care of."

The girl flashed a defiant look at him.

"My word ——" she began. Something in Stratford's face stopped her. She bowed her head and put the money away.

They drank the wine slowly. Stratford accepted the girl's capitulation and made her talk of herself. She became quite voluble as the wine mounted to her head and told of her early life as a schoolgirl, her work as a typewriter, and how ultimately the exacting, humdrum life in a large office had become irksome, till in the end she gradually drifted into the 'sporting life.' Stratford guided her away from that

portion of her tale with some skill. Her speech gradually became less interspersed with phrases of her later life, and she showed evidence of a rather extensive original education. Cosgrove listened with an amused expression on his heavy features. After a time he rose in answer to a summons from Mike.

"You'll excuse me," he said to Stratford. "I'll be back in a few moments."

He passed out into the adjacent room.

Miss Fuller rose to let him go by, for the space was very small. As she closed the door Stratford, who had also risen, sat down to give more room. The girl's white forearm brushed against his cheek. It felt cool and smooth. His face was a trifle flushed from the wine, and as the girl let her arm rest for a moment against the hot skin he did not turn his face away. She raised her hand and passed her fingers through his abundant hair, meeting his upward look of astonishment with a glistening eye.

"Your hair is pretty," she said, letting her fingers rest for a moment at the back of his head. She ran her palm over his cheek, slipped the fingers under his chin, lifted his face, bent down and kissed him full on the mouth.

Stratford rose quickly, but she kept her full lips close to his, pressing her lithe body against his chest. Suddenly the allure of it rushed into his brain. He passed his left arm behind her shoulders, turned her body slightly sideways, and lifted her other arm until it encircled his neck. She held him fast for a

long time, so long that the breath from her nostrils blew into his eyelashes, and he could feel her shoulders move as she breathed. In the next instant she let him go.

"Now I have the right to order another bottle," she cried, with a triumphant flash in her great dark eyes.

Stratford's face set.

"You mean ——" he said slowly, with a gathering scowl on his face. "You mean ——."

The girl's exultant expression died. She put her hand over his mouth.

"No! No! I did not mean anything. I meant ——. Oh, don't look at me like that. I meant only that now we were pals." Tears rose to her eyes. "Please don't get angry." She smiled through her tears. "You do not understand. You belong in another sphere. I can see that. I won't offend again." She dried her tears quickly. Come sit down. I just couldn't help it. I'll be good now. Tell me—you are going to be a great man some day, are you not?"

She made him talk of himself. He was conscious of a certain attraction in the situation. The minutes slipped by, and Cosgrove put his head inside the door at intervals. The room outside slowly filled up, the negro musicians sang popular songs at intervals, and on the whole the place was orderly enough. At times a gay peal of laughter from a woman's throat was carried over the partition. The temperature of the whole place rose with the increase of the crowd, and

it grew particularly warm and stuffy in the little space. Mildred Fuller unbuttoned her waist at the neck and turned the loose edges in, revealing a white smooth neck. She wore a tiny amethyst cross suspended from a very fine gold chain fastened about her neck.

"I ought to be a Catholic," she explained, seeing Stratford's look of astonishment. "I retain the end and the beginning of the rosary—I have forgotten about the *aves* in between."

It was her first really womanly gentleness, and the effect was not disagreeable measured by the little droop of her head when she said it. She lifted the little ornament now and kissed it with her full red lips.

"You will take the *aves* up again," Stratford said gently.

"Perhaps so," she answered, raising her face. She looked straight into his eyes. "I think I could be led back to them again. But I guess no one wants to do it."

"It's getting late," Stratford said suddenly. "Come along, I'll take you home. I am afraid I am not a leader toward rosaries nor anything else."

She buttoned her waist at the neck and he helped her on with her coat. Cosgrove came in.

"Going, Stratford?" Well, you can get a cab at the door. The nighthawks are beginning to gather. Drop in as soon as you can, I want to talk farther with you."

The pair passed out into the dripping rain. A

rather sharp gust of wind blew a sheet of rainwater into their faces. The girl shook her head and laughed.

"I think it's glorious," she cried gayly. "Let's walk. You don't mind, dear, do you."

"You will have to show me the way," he answered.

She slipped her hand into his arm and turned him in an easterly direction. The wind came from the east, and they bent forward as they faced its fitful gusts. She led him for many streets, past long rows of tall rain-soaked tenements until the river came into view, the lights on the Long Island shore blinking dimly through the rain. Suddenly she turned north for a short distance, and then turned again toward the river. Stratford felt as though he had encountered an oasis in a desert. A row of small brick houses lined both sides of the street. He remembered reading of these little islands in various portions of the city, where politicians, who find it necessary to have residence in the districts they control, resist the invasion of the slums or manufactories, and maintain the entire street in livable condition. A certain number of merchants whose interests were located along the river front—lumber men, brick dealers, commission merchants and the like—lived in some of the houses finding it of advantage to be close to their businesses.

The girl stopped at a two-story brick house, with a small garden which was protected by an iron railing.

She opened the gate and proceeded toward the front door of the house.

"You are coming in, are you not?" she called over her shoulder as Stratford stopped at the gate.


"It is very late," he answered.

"There is no one in the house but Mary," she said pleadingly, as she stepped to his side. "The cook sleeps out. Come, I'll show you my little home. I may never get another chance. It will take only a minute."

She led him up the short flight of stone steps leading to the door, which she opened quickly with her key. A shaded electric light on a little table illuminated the front hall. She took off her hat and coat and helped Stratford off with his.

"You see I am hostess now," she laughed quite gayly. "Come into the dining-room."

She preceded him down the hall into a square room, which was diffused with a dim light as she threw the switch at the door. An old-fashioned mahogany table with a lace centerpiece and a fern dish stood in the center of the room. A dark bronze chandelier with yellow glass squares hung over the table suspended by a chain from the ceiling. A long low sideboard also of old mahogany stood along one wall. A number of mahogany chairs, a deep red rug, a side table and a few pictures, which were not recognizable in the dim illumination from the center chandelier, comprised the rest of the furnishings. The wall paper was dark red and the hangings seemed to be



of the same shade. On the whole the effect was such as one would expect to find in the home of a person of refinement. No cut glass was visible, nor was there any display of hand painted china.

"Sit here for a moment," she said, indicating a chair near a window which evidently led to a small glass enclosed veranda. "My feet are wet. I'll run upstairs and be down in a moment."

Stratford remained silent. He made no attempt to analyze his sensations. He heard the girl run quickly upstairs and then a door closed. As his vision became more accustomed to the light, he noted that the pictures were in accord with the impression given by the entire room. One, an original, a nude by Henner, hung in a corner. The peculiar dead skin hue rose quite startlingly from the canvas even in the dim illumination. The rest of the pictures were steel engravings of the more generally distributed type. A tall palm stood at the window opposite where he sat. It showed care, for only the tips of one of the spreading leaves were yellow. He fished a cigarette out of his pocket. A small tray with matches and an ash receiver stood on a tabouret near his chair. He lighted the cigarette and blew the first puff of smoke out of his mouth with some contentment.

"Dear," came the girl's voice from above, "come up here into my sitting-room. It's a heap more comfortable."

Stratford rose and proceeded upstairs. The girl

stood in the door frame of the front room. She backed into the chamber as he appeared, closing and opening her hand, beckoning like a child who has not yet learned to call with her eyes. She had changed her gown, and stood now in the artfully illuminated room attired in a light yellow kimona and low shoes. The room ran across the entire front of the house. An alcove occupied one side, in which stood a brass bed with heavy, perfectly plain dull brass posts and a lace cover. A roomy divan stood against the foot of the bed. The color scheme here too was red, but not of a dainty shade, as one would expect in a woman's chamber. A slender desk stood between the windows. A large tapestry chair and several others covered with dark fabric stood about the room. A tabouret stood beside the bed, on which was a small electric lamp, which threw a soft light on the pillows and some smoking paraphernalia resting close to its base. The divan was piled up with a number of pillows of various shades. A tall shaded lamp with a Japanese bronze standard stood in a corner near the window. A log fire just beginning to flare into a blaze sputtered on the hearth.

"Here, sit in this big chair," she said. "I will give you a pair of slippers. Your feet must be wet."

Stratford sat down, still silent. The girl went to a closet.

"No, my feet are not wet," Stratford said suddenly, awakening from his thoughts. "My shoes are water-proof."

She did not insist. There was an embarrassing silence, broken by a woman's footfalls down the hall. "In here, Mary," the girl called. A slender colored maid in a black gown and white cap came in, bearing a tray with a freezer, in which was a bottle of champagne. Two glasses stood beside the freezer.

"Put it down on that tabouret, Mary," the girl ordered.

Mildred twisted the cork from the bottle with considerable skill and filled the two glasses. The light from the lamp shone on her thick hair and the smooth white neck. She handed a glass to Stratford, who rose from his chair. They stood opposite each other, and she raised her glass until it was level with his face, the bubbling liquid giving intermittent glimpses of her own dark luminous eyes. As she lowered the glass the red of her lips mingled with the yellow of the wine. He watched her drink her glass empty, and then emptied his. She took him by the hand and led him to the divan. He rested his head among the pillows.

"I suppose it was because you would not let me have my own way at Cosgrove's," she said, "that made me want to bring you here. You are not sorry, are you?" She bent down and kissed him again full on the mouth.

CHAPTER III

ONSHI adjusted the shade at the north window in the dining-room. He let it run up, pulled it down again and ultimately let it rest in much the same situation it originally occupied. The chamber maid stuck her pert little face in at the door.

"Mr. Jim didn't come in last night," she said in a whisper. "The boss asked me to tell him to come down to breakfast, 'cause he wanted to talk to him. What'll I do?"

"Do nothing. Mind your own business," the Mongolian answered quietly. "If Mr. Hersey does not ask again, say nothing."

Hersey's light footstep came down the hall. The maid vanished. Onshi served breakfast in silence. He also placed a cover for Jim. He did it very slowly, examining each piece with care. He had the gambling instinct of the Asiatic, and like all fatalists had supreme confidence in chance aided by a little human manipulation. He was right this time, for in a few minutes Jim came in. He was a trifle pale, but his cheek was cleanly shaven and the finger nails freshly manicured.

"Didn't Rose give you my message?" Hersey asked.

"Yes. You are a little ahead of your usual hour," Jim answered. His voice was a trifle husky, and as he reached for his fork his hand shook slightly.

Hersey look up sharply. "Speech-making is hard work, Jim," he said, with a peculiar smile.

"My speech did not fag me," Jim answered quickly. I went down to see Cosgrove after I was finished, and imbibed several bottles of the sparkling fluid which, by the way, you like so much. I also consumed the rest of the night in a manner not usually discussed at the breakfast-table, but I'll do it if you do not fear to have your envy aroused.

Hersey laughed.

"I decline to answer," he said. "It is your candor which I regard as one of your redeeming characteristics. It gives me some hope for the future. It is a significant fact that the contest of life is usually best met by men who are capable of a certain amount of dissipation. It would seem that this reversion to the barbaric is a quality which is in some way allied to fortitude under adversity. It makes men capable of leading a forlorn hope and sending their sons into battle. I advise a ride through the Park and a fine cold absinthe at eleven o'clock. But to get down to business. Tell me, are you irrevocably pledged to that Tammany bunch?"

"I won't say that. I do feel, however, that much can be done from their ranks, and I'm going to try."

"You have the notion that our constitution can be lived up to, Jim. You are wrong. I am an American

citizen, I have, too, a profound admiration for the idealistic principles which are presumed to be the foundation of our form of government. Yet, too, I have had experience enough to realize its impracticability. The result is a condition of affairs which is used for improper and dishonest purposes. On the other hand, the government would fail absolutely if we tried to actually live up to its principles. First of all, men are not born equal. That assumption has been scientifically proven a fallacy. Practically, the scientific deduction is found correct, rare as this may be in the arts."

Hersey rose from his seat. He was a frugal eater, especially at breakfast. Onshi brought him a tray with cigarettes in a glass jar and some matches. Hersey lighted a cigarette and threw the still burning match at the fireplace, where it flickered for a moment, though an ash tray was quite available. He stood now with his back to the mantel, a formidable picture, with his tall well-made body outlined against the morning sunlight. He wore a conventional business suit of dark rough material, a soft shirt, and a dark tie. His shoes were a little more dainty than one would expect at his time of life, though this is one of the niceties men carry into middle age in a subconscious sort of a way, giving rise to a peculiar sensation in the observer, like when one has walked for some time behind a woman in high heeled boots and a modern hat, to be ultimately confronted by gray hair and wrinkles. Though be it said that feminine

allure is not altogether a question of absence of gray hair and wrinkles.

Hersey puffed his cigarette in silence. Stratford watched him with a feeling that the elder man was giving considerable attention to a subject for which he had so recently shown his contempt. Jim did not share the timidity most persons felt when in Hersey's presence. On the contrary, he took the attitude that he was financially independent as far as gross necessities were concerned, and had indeed on more than one occasion informed the austere old gentleman that he "could go to hell" with his allowance, and also that he had no doubt that it was only to conform to certain social customs that made him give up any allowance at all. Hersey had turned ominously pale when first informed of Stratford's viewpoint, but his anger had only been met with a reiteration of the original statement, and in the end with the almost automatic admiration strong men feel for the actions of others along the lines they themselves follow, had accepted the situation, and finally asked his nephew if he regarded the allowance as too small. Jim had answered with some heat that "it is a damned sight too small to accept ignominities for," an answer which Hersey secretly rejoiced over, though he did not increase the allowance by any means.

At this moment Stratford was aware of a certain gentleness in his uncle, and, like all men, felt that this attitude was far more difficult to meet than the usual

positive aggressive method of attack men like Hersey employ. Indeed, this is true of all men, a reason no doubt why women who have the ever-ready tears to serve up on short notice so frequently gain their desires with men who are otherwise not readily influenced by the emotional aspects of a situation.

"You know very well," Stratford began, "that my mind is made up in the matter." He gulped down a poached egg, though he made a wry face as he swallowed it, like a man who takes a drink for its constitutional effect rather than with the idea of conserving the sense of taste. "I fancy it does not sit well on the Hersey arrongance to run the risk of having the family linen dragged into publicity. On the other hand, if you have anything you are particularly ashamed of, it need not be coupled with the roasting I'll get on the newspaper gridiron."

Stratford was lashing himself into a feeling of resentment, so that he might have an excuse to avoid rejecting Hersey's request to give the matter up, one he expected would come.

"You are a baby, Jim," Hersey said mildly, though his gray eyes flashed for an instant. "You are like all of us, also, not gifted with second sight. You take it for granted that I'm going to be at odds with you. In a measure you are right. On the other hand, I have quite made up my mind to withdraw my opposition to your method of procedure."

"What's the condition?" Stratford asked quickly.

"Damn your impudence," Hersey retorted, with

some heat. "There is no condition. Do you consider me so thoroughly commercial as to warrant that question?"

"My dear sir, I have never known you to do a single thing for which you did not exact a return. However, you may have no such motive in this instance. Frankly, I am glad to hear that you will not oppose me any longer. Also, I will be honest enough to add that I felt that if you wanted to, you could beat me at the polls through some mysterious channel of which I know nothing."

"Well, let's get down to business," Hersey said, with a little laugh at Stratford's last remark. "Remember, I make no promises as to moral support with respect to newspaper interviews and that sort of thing. I regard this as impossible, but I'll back you financially, and also, I will not be quoted as being against you."

"I wonder what the old devil has up his sleeve," Stratford thought. Hersey had his gray eyes fixed on those of his nephew, and with the sixth sense great financiers have, and which, by the way, is only the sum of the other five properly grouped, read Stratford's thought.

"The reform people are going to run a man named Hunter for District Attorney," Hersey went on. "He is a dangerous antagonist. Your party has a weak man for the head of the State ticket. The man against him has a chance, for many of your own party will want to kill the head of the ticket, and conse-

quently will vote the entire list against you. The boss of your local party sees that—he's not a fool if he is a damned thief. If he can run enough men of unblemished character and reputation for local offices, he may balance the proposition. You and a few others of your kind—young men from the so-called better classes who are presumably not in need of graft—are expected to carry the ticket through. Many intelligent voters will support you, irrespective of party lines. You will be heralded as the reformer in the enemy's camp, and a lot of people will believe it. When you are in office,—if you get there,—you will have to decide whether you will be the tool of the party leaders or not."

"Or the creature of your corporations," Stratford put in.

Hersey lighted a fresh cigarette.

"A corporation," he began quietly, "is not a thing. It is made to appear as an octopus, a snake with many tails, or a hydra-headed monster, to suit the tastes of various half-starved cartoonists or to increase the circulation of a newspaper. As a matter of fact, it is simply the conservation of energy guided by brains. The utility of all commodities is increased by the centralization of the executive management of a number of interests. A man may discover oil on his farm, but he can't vend it, even if he says it was put there by God, unless he gets in touch with the world's markets and so he places his find in the hands of the venders—and we sell it for him."

"Nevertheless," Stratford answered, "you marketers of products are at best intermediate creatures. You neither own the fuel nor the land which produces it. You simply manipulate it, and incidentally its value, and are not unlike the Kishineff Jews who stand on the outskirts of the Odessa market centers and haggle with the Tartar farmer for his product, and then sell it at the best price they can get within the town. Usually you handle the producer dishonestly, just as the Kishineff Jew does, and then cheat each other whenever you get a chance. Among yourselves you are known as bankers and brokers. At heart and in truth you are thieves as bad if not worse than the politicians for whom you express contempt. In Odessa the Tartar is goaded by the police into arising in open rebellion, and a massacre takes place. Of course this is because the so-called broker is a Jew. Here you handle the situation through your legislative bodies. As yet these are not controlled by Jews, though no doubt they'll get there after a while; but you achieve the same result. My mission in politics is a fair one. I will work to the end of avoiding discriminative legislation that will increase this menace as I see it. I wish to be frank with you. If you offer me financial aid now with the idea that I will be influenced in behalf of that sort of thing, you are mistaken, and can go to hell with your support—as I invited you to do with your allowance."

"That will make a fine campaign speech, Jim," Hersey answered. "Don't forget it. You'll make

a hit with it. As far as your sweet invitation to take my money to hell is concerned, I would be glad to do so if this were possible. I am informed, however, on high authority that his Satanic majesty needs no financial assistance, and that his corporation is self-supporting. I will say one more thing to you before we get down to business."

Hersey walked to the window. He was genuinely interested. This interview was the first really unusual situation he had been confronted with for a long time. In his heart he did not believe Stratford meant all he said. On the contrary, with the peculiar radical notion men of his kind have with respect to idealistic conceptions of financial questions, he believed that Stratford was making a bid for recognition along the lines all political reformers follow—the exposure of the festering sore, exploitation of its ravages, but with no persistent effort at affording a remedy and ultimately working an unconditional surrender to the machinations of the mighty dollar manipulated by skilful hands.

Stratford waited for Hersey to go on. The latter still remained silent, looking intently out on the little square place beneath the dining-room windows, as though an inspiration might rise from its evenly laid cement.

"What I said is not alone a campaign speech, it is the truth," Stratford said presently. "After Bismarck was dismissed by an enthusiastic young Emperor, he meant what I just said when he told Mem-

minger, 'One of the greatest dangers to the empire is that the princes consult the stock exchange list rather than the price of produce.' "

"Oh, Bismarck was a radicalist," Hersey said, turning rapidly about and speaking with more animation than he had yet shown. "Memminger is a newspaper editor of much the same sort of mind and training as von Bismarck himself. Also he is a brutal materialist, with no regard for established customs. I regard him as a blind follower of the so-called Bismarckian policy. Too, he is physically quite such a man as the Chancellor was—tall, powerfully built, with a great head and a sagging paunch which he fills with Bavarian beer at breakfast. Look here, I will finish what I have to say in this connection at once. In all great enterprises it is necessary to carry a certain burden which makes possible the vending of all commodities. A railroad is not only made up of freight handlers, rolling stock, and artisans—all of which, of course, contribute to the actual operation of the plant. It is also necessary that the finances be looked after; and though indeed the actual worker regards this as an evil, he knows, too, that it is a necessary one, and carries it accordingly."

"I do not say that financial men are unnecessary," Stratford broke in. "All I ask is that they be not permitted to make or wreck great interests at will—to beggar the producer when they will, in order to get even with each other. Not to be in a position to influence legislation in order to accomplish what they

wish, for their own satisfaction or to ruin an antagonist. If they will take a reasonable income, a fair reimbursement for their services in handling the financial portion of a proposition, and let a reasonable profit accrue to the producer, all will be well."

Hersey laughed. "Well, go on, our new Saviour."

"Don't be sarcastic over it. Listen," Stratford retorted. He rose from his chair and walked the floor as he spoke, using various gestures which he employed when making a speech. "Take the case of Farrell's trolley road. You will remember that he wanted to get a franchise to cross the bridge over the river. His passengers are largely workingmen. Men and women had to walk on their way to and from work a good quarter of a mile from one road ending to the other. Rain or snow made this a great hardship. The stock of this company is held by small property-holders in the adjacent borough. He wanted to arrange a deal by which he could issue transfer privileges between his road and the City Railway Company, whose tracks his extension would meet. The City Railway people held up the proposition for a long time, so as to get the extra fare. At last our fine legislators agreed to give Farrell the franchise for thirty thousand dollars. Thirty thousand dollars to come out of the pockets of the stockholders, who would get even by raising the rent of the little flats and houses they owned, on the theory that their tenants, these very workingmen and women would have better facilities for reaching their work-

shops. Farrell kicked like a mad mule. In the end he paid the thirty thousand, but in the following way: Twenty thousand to the legislators, five thousand to the go-between, and five thousand to himself. Of the five thousand which went to the go-between one thousand went to the various city departments, that no delay might occur in passing on the plans to obviate a hold-up from the bureau which is supposed to allow only a certain surface of road to be constructed at one time. You laughed yourself sick over it when the story came out. Called Farrell a 'slic dog,' and also added, 'We'll make him buy the market with his ill-gotten gains, and the eggs will come to our basket after all.' That thirty thousand dollar was wrung from the people for you so-called financiers to fatten on—so that men like you can amuse themselves combating over a tape in a sumptuously furnished office, or the wife of some fat Jew can display a lot of diamonds at the opera and excite the envy of wives of men who are straight and square and can't afford to buy diamonds for them. That's what I'm going into politics for. I'm going to get enough men about me to obviate this sort of thing and I believe it's perfectly feasible to do it."

Hersey listened to his nephew with increasing interest. He had heard this sort of thing in much the same way for many years. He knew, too, that most successful politicians began in this manner; and though somewhat annoyed at Stratford's attack upon himself, concluded that this young enthusiast would

ultimately go the way his predecessors had gone. He also had a notion that he was a poseur, but on the whole regarded this as justifiable enough if it helped achieve the object.

"Well, I've listened long enough to your speech, Jim," Hersey said. "I reiterate my original proposition: I'll give you fifty thousand cash, have my attorney place it to your credit to-day. Go ahead and use it for whatever purpose you wish. Make good, though, if you want any more."

"Fine!" Stratford cried, slapping his knee. "Fine! To pull the king's leg to dethrone him with his own ammunition. Great! Machiavelli beaten to a frazzle! Shade of Bismarck, look kindly down upon me. All right, Hersey. Watch me."

"I'll watch you, all right," Hersey answered, laughing at his nephew's enthusiasm in spite of himself. "Don't forget your horseback ride," he called from the door. "When you take that absinthe, be glad that you are still young enough to be able to disregard the laws of health. Good-by." And the tall, well-made figure disappeared into the darkened hall with its soft carpet and polished woodwork.


Stratford finished his coffee and lighted a cigarette. As a matter of fact he was honest in the belief that correction of the evils of legislation in matters pertaining to the interests of the working classes was possible. Though never concerned in marketing nor producing the world's output himself, he had become convinced that the classes discriminated against

the masses only through faulty enactment of the laws, and it seemed to him an easy matter to throw himself into the work and ultimately achieve amelioration of existing conditions. He reviewed the problems from this viewpoint as he complacently puffed his cigarette. Like most men who do not attack an absorbing problem until the first inco-ordinate years of life have gone by, he did not have the guiding influence of experience to serve him; and though in a better position as regards mental balance with respect to accuracy of analysis than a younger man, he lacked the necessary number of failures which, after all, are the great teachers leading to a correction and ultimate success in any undertaking of magnitude. General conclusions may be correct enough, yet they should always be the result of wading through minor details to render the mind susceptible of wise discrimination. No great truth is at any time the outcome of inspired genius; it has ever been the result of persistent application to the principle involved in any question, and then the peculiarly analytical mind which is fallaciously called genius arrives at the truth.

Genius is a term used only by those who lack the necessary application to arrive at a logical conclusion. The result of effort is understood and its fruit accepted, and the ignorance of the beneficiary relegates to the background the entire labor which made it, and complacently calls it genius. Stratford was in no sense a genius. The main factors involved in an issue ran symmetrically through an unusually bril-

liant and receptive mind, which made him feel that the execution of his notions was simple, never thinking for a moment that the efforts of men of brain and brawn had been devoted to the problem he now so confidently attacked, with little if any amelioration of the conditions except in a few isolated instances, when a slight practical correction had been achieved at the cost of great personal sacrifice.

He regarded Tolstoy a dreamer and a poseur who thought himself a sort of second Redeemer, and who believed that the exploitation of the teachings of the Christian Saviour would correct all evils. Indeed, he had not infrequently stated that "with no intention of offering affront to the believers and the faithful, the teaching of Jesus Christ has not only nothing new to offer, but also has had nineteen hundred years in which to accomplish certain reforms and had most ignominiously failed." On the other hand, *he* had hit upon the one way in which modification of the existing conditions was possible, even though the reformation would of necessity be but a meager one. The pitfalls which had beset the efforts of others he believed he would easily escape, showing in this conception some of the Hersey arrogance, though this was perhaps not objectionable on the ground that those to whom defeat seems an impossibility not infrequently achieve success because of their persistence, when more timid workers accept failure too soon. He believed that the way to achieve his intent best was to ally himself with the interests of those



most concerned in causing the most glaring evils, and thus force a correction at the very fountain head of evil, slowly pushing his way upward to where greater reformation was possible. In this he showed considerable discernment, and as he sat in the Hersey dining-room puffing fragrant cigarette smoke into the air he felt himself destined to become a genuine reformer, and that his efforts would produce great and lasting results.

Presently he rose and made his way to his room, where he changed his attire and slipped into breeches and boots. Onshi brought him his spurs, which he fastened into sockets set in the heels of his boots. He was one of the few men who guide their mounts with the spur, and who know how to manage the right arm without encumbering it with a riding whip. A crop he regarded as caddish and the brass buckle of a spur strap an affectation. He enveloped himself in a long coat, stuck a fresh cigarette in his mouth and descended to the library. Rose met him in the hall as he was about to leave, and handed him a card on which was printed in square type: "Rev. Carle Boonton."

"Is the gentleman downstairs?" he asked the maid.

"Yes. In the reception-room."

"Show him up here."

Stratford greeted the newcomer with a warm shake of the hand.

"Hello, Boonton!" he said, with evident pleasure

in his voice, "what makes you desert your field of slums and sweat shops, dirty Jews and dirtier Gentiles at this hour?"

"Oh, I just wanted to have a little talk with you," the visitor retorted.

He was a very tall, pale man, with a shock of red hair which fell in a sort of cowlick over his forehead and, together with a thin, hooked nose and hollow cheeks, caused him to bear some resemblance to a rooster. Beyond this he was strongly made, with loose joints, large feet, wide angular shoulders, a clean-shaven face, thin mobile lips which covered unusually large, white teeth, deep set blue eyes, and flat ears.

He shook hands with his left hand, keeping the other in the pocket of his sack coat. He did not look in any sense like a preacher of the Gospel, and indeed showed the result of the peculiar life he led. Born in the Middle West, he had come to Yale at the time Stratford was there. He was a thorough, painstaking student, if not a brilliant one, and Stratford, who was of the more gifted kind, had taken a fancy to him, and had aided him not a little in the preparation of his recitations. Stratford's interest had its origin in the fact that the lanky Westerner was burdened with a deformity of his right hand which quite disabled it. In all other respects Boonton was normally made, and Stratford had felt a strange sympathy in his heart when he saw Boonton watching the 'varsity crew at work. Boonton sat on

the rail of the boat-house veranda as the crew put off from the float, with his enormous shoulders drawn up close to his ears as though in pain, and Stratford had noted with peculiar emotion the set of Boonton's lips as the boat drew away under the press of the mighty sweeps, and noted also the impatient gesture with which he rammed his deformed hand into his coat pocket as he turned away.

Stratford had joined him on the little bridge leading to shore, and with impetuous boyish generosity had spoken to Boonton of his affliction. Boonton was grateful enough to have someone to whom he could pour out the tumult in his heart, and the two young men became quite good friends during the long walk back to the college dormitory, a relationship they maintained during their university life.

Boonton was the only child of a wealthy oil well operator in the Middle West, and had come East to study mechanical engineering. His father had insisted that the boy work the wells despite the handicap of his deformity, with the view of minimizing the magnitude of the affliction in the boy's mind, and indeed the youngster had learned to manage a wrench and cut a thread on a steel pipe with considerable skill. His mother, a gentle, sweet creature of greater refinement and education than the elder Boonton, had deprecated very much the method employed by the father. However, the old man believed that the hardship of the work would season the lad and make him less sensitive to his handicap as time went on.

One day the boy came home white and wide-eyed, and told his mother that one of the gang he worked with had poked fun at him because a wrench had slipped from his deformed hand at a critical moment as he was helping to joint two pipe sections together. He held his deformed hand out with a piteous expression in his drawn face, and added that it was only a "union joint that any dub might have hooked up."

He had resented the teasing of the tormentor, and high words followed. The man became very angry in the end, and told young Boonton, "Go look at yourself in the glass. I'll bet your mother was chased by an Indian—and, by God, I think he caught her."

The boy promptly jabbed his deformed hand into the fellow's mouth, dislodging several front teeth, and had to be pulled off of the then prostrate mechanic by force, to avoid murder.

The mother petted the boy back to a happier frame of mind, though this was accomplished only with great difficulty, and not until the poor woman had shed tears herself, which of course made the boy forget his own heart pangs and direct his efforts toward comforting his mother.

Old man Boonton had ripped out great oaths when he heard of the affair, and the mother with feminine acumen saw her chance and induced the hard-headed Westerner to send the boy East, where, perhaps, he would be less likely to be met with affront than

among the rougher element at the wells. Consequently the lad was prepared for Yale, and ultimately made an unconditioned admittance.

He told Stratford his tale as they walked home together, and thus began a friendship which lasted through many years. Soon after graduation Boonton went back to his oil fields and Stratford took up the life and ease of a young attorney who did not care if he never tried a case.

When the row with Spain broke out Stratford joined a regiment of cavalry recruited in part from the cowboys of the West and from men of leisure of the East. Strange as it may seem, this made a good mixture, and the regiment made a gallant showing at the fight near Santiago. It was here that the men met again. Boonton because of his deformity was of course debarred from enlistment, but went with the army in the capacity of a volunteer in the service of a religious organization which had the office of looking after the spiritual welfare of the soldiers. Fortunately the organization also furnished lounging tents, literature, and music at odd times, a stroke of policy which made it possible to obtain sufficient following not to look ridiculous.

The men met one blistering afternoon. Stratford was on picket duty with a detail from his own command. In the confusion of the first rush to Cuba his regiment had been sent on without their horses and served as infantry. Stratford's sergeant, a tall blonde youth who had joined the regiment to efface

certain unsavory ultra-sporty actions which had made him notorious, and incidentally excluded him from the set his family moved in, had a Mauser projectile flirt with his left knee joint. He promptly dropped down and leaked blood into the grass. Stratford helped him up and the two made for the rear.

About a quarter of a mile back the sergeant collapsed beside a pool of dirty water in which two young privates were trying to dilute the dirt in their underwear. The two privates volunteered all kinds of information with respect to the transportation of wounded learned at first aid lectures. Presently Boonton appeared from nowhere. He did not seem to be surprised to see Stratford, as he yanked the wounded man across his shoulders, supporting him with remarkable adroitness with his deformed hand, and trudged sturdily to the rear.

Stratford had had a peculiarly disagreeable sensation strike him in the pit of the stomach when the thud of the Mauser bowled the sergeant over. He had never seen blood that way before. The sergeant had become progressively paler and paler until he dropped beside the pool. Stratford's complexion was not particularly rosy either, and he followed Boonton and his burden along the mule path with an exasperating feeling of dizziness, and supported himself on friendly tree trunks for fear of falling into the muck and mire of the road.

When camp was reached Stratford accepted without comment several sarcastic allusions to his "weak

belly" made by his captain, and fell asleep under a tree. When he awakened Boonton was sitting beside him, with a long cigar in his mouth and his thin profile, outlined against the sky, made Stratford think of the allusion the mechanic, back in the Ohio oil fields, had made as to Boonton's progenitors.

That night after grub, which made one wish for the imagination of a Christian Scientist, Boonton told Stratford that the sergeant had gone to his Eternal Maker. In speaking of his own affairs, Boonton had said that his own father was dead—killed by an explosion of an oil tank during a strike, that his mother had been much shocked, and had grown to hate the whole thing, so he had sold out and come East.

When the war came along he had come to the front to help a little in the work. He did not seem to be disturbed by the fact that he was a civilian in a camp of soldiers, a position which always entails ignominy upon the non-combatant, and accounts for the disagreeable things war correspondents at times say about certain officers who have not the good manners to conceal their contempt for what they regard as burdensome hangers-on.

At the close of hostilities Stratford came back with his decimated regiment, and Boonton stayed on, carrying his mission to relieve suffering—since he could not cause it—into the fever-stricken hospitals of Santiago. Later he became a lay preacher and ultimately was ordained a Baptist minister, on the

theory that this sect is not particularly exacting as to vows.

At present he had charge of a mission on the East Side of the great city of New York, in the midst of the Ghetto, and labored heroically if not efficiently with the filth, the ignorance, and the hopeless narrowness of his surroundings.

"Word has come to me of your work for the laboring classes," Boonton said as he seated himself at Stratford's bidding in a large comfortable chair beside the writing table.

Stratford smiled. "Have a cigarette," he suggested, pushing them forward.

"So my efforts have penetrated to your isolation."

Boonton lighted his cigarette, striking the match with his left hand. He carried the right in his coat pocket, an attitude he only varied when some act called for the use of both hands. Time had not lessened his sensitiveness in this connection, and he concealed his affliction whenever possible. He ran his fingers through his abundant hair, and when one rebellious wisp insisted upon obtruding on his forehead he shook it back like a child emerging from the water.

"I came to bring you my good wishes, Stratford," he said, with the peculiar enunciation men have who speak much to strangers, especially those not well trained in the speaker's language. His voice had altered, being of somewhat higher pitch, no doubt

due to the unconscious conservation of the vocal organs which comes to those who use the faculty of speech to a great extent.

"I am pleased to think that we work toward the same end," Stratford answered. "Though we use different kinds of ammunition, the goal is the same. Yours, however, has the sanction of a long accepted doctrine. It is perhaps easier to play with the emotions than to force a situation because of its inherent practical value."

"I do not believe that our methods are so much at variance as you think," Boonton said quietly. "Ever the Catholic clergy have modified their methods to conform to the necessities of modern times and conditions. It is true they still educate their clergy in monasteries secluded from worldly influences, but their men soon learn to study and understand the practical needs of their parishioners. Perhaps their vow of celibacy makes prolonged isolation necessary. In any event, the purely technical part of their education is best attained by isolation and away from deterring influences. This is largely true of other denominations. I do not regard this method of preliminary education as disqualifying them for actual practical contests as they present themselves in everyday life. Surely, Stratford, you cannot mean that the teaching of the Christian Church is not an essential accessory to all efforts which lead to enlightenment?"

"I won't say that exactly," Stratford answered,

with a laugh. "Nevertheless I feel that very little is accomplished by holding up an unattainable standard. However, we will not quarrel over it to-day. Tell me, what special mission brings you here now?"

"First of all, I want you to become better acquainted with the needs of those whom you intend to serve. You cannot do this by riding horseback, lolling about at fashionable teas, and reading monographs on sociology. I want you to come with me to my people, to see just what their needs are. And then you will see how easy it will be to legislate for their improvement,—at least see how something can be done to better the hygienic conditions under which they live. The ultimate method of procedure I will of course have to leave with you."

"Very well, Carle," Stratford answered briskly. "I'll get my ride, have a hot bath, and meet you at my club for lunch at one o'clock. Then I'll go where you lead me."

The two men passed out together.

"Until one o'clock, then. Au revoir," Boonton said as he held out his left hand.

CHAPTER IV

BOONTON ate the somewhat dainty luncheon served at Stratford's club like a man who eats to live. Stratford began his lunch with a glass of sherry, which Boonton declined. Boonton also confined the conversation to matters of current interest.

"I will leave my plea for its practical aspect," Boonton said as they sat down. Stratford politely acquiesced.

On the clubhouse steps Stratford waved his cane at a taximeter.

"If your horseback ride has fatigued you, we will ride," Boonton said. "But if not, I would prefer to walk."

"Always thoughtful of your immediates," Stratford answered laughingly. "I'll compromise. We can drive to near your place and walk the rest of the distance."

"Thank you. My people do not like their poverty accentuated by contrast."

They drove through the Bowery and left the motor at the corner of Rivington Street. Boonton led the way for many blocks toward the river. The street was lined with pushcarts laden with produce which peddlers were selling to women in shabby clothes.

Most of the women were past thirty years of age, and looked older; none of them wore hats. The sidewalks were crowded with buyers, children, and venders. The venders wore long unkempt beards. Not a few wore long linen blouses and caps.

"That is the costume they wear in South Russia," Boonton explained." Most of these people come from the Black Sea districts. They have been driven from their homes by the government. You remember Kishineff, of course. Well, they have come over here to this land of liberty. I'm free to say that they are not desirable citizens as they look now, but we have hopes of making them so."

"Well, as the small boy says, I hope you get your hope. They don't smell very good."

"That's true; but no policy of persecution ever elevated anything—it always develops the most undesirable qualities in the persecuted one."

A tall thin Jew with a sticky beard and soft felt hat approached the men. He had a tray at his waist suspended by means of a strap around his neck. The tray was laden with bone collar buttons stuck in white cardboard, neckties, and shoe laces. At the edge of the tray a number of gayly colored suspenders hung down.

"Collar buttons, collar buttons, suspenders, gentlemen?" the man called in a peculiar guttural voice.

"How much for the collar buttons?" Stratford asked.

"Six for five cents," the Jew answered. He

reached over and lifted a card of collar buttons from the tray. The sleeve of his blouse drew up, revealing a hairy, muscular forearm. The hand was broad and strongly fashioned. The finger nails were quite black with dirt, yet as he turned the hand to show the bottoms of the buttons the palm was smooth.

"I'll take six, please," Stratford said.

The man reached into his trousers pocket, from which he drew a piece of tissue paper and wrapped the card into it with a deft motion. As his left hand dropped to his side one of the collar buttons fell to the sidewalk. He placed one large foot between it and the buyer. Stratford saw it, however.

"Is that not one of my buttons?" he asked sharply.

"Maybe! By —, how nearly a mistake," the vender answered. He stooped down, picked up the button and enclosed it with the others in the little package.

"Where are you from?" Boonton asked. He felt much annoyed that his first demonstration should be accompanied by a racial peculiarity so much at variance with what most people would regard as entitling a people to special consideration.

"I am from Kishineff," the man answered. He did not seem the least disconcerted by the failure of his ruse. He held out the package to Stratford now, with a broad grin on his face. "Mistakes will happen," he added as Stratford did not reach out for his purchase. However, in the next moment Stratford

handed over a nickel, which the man put in his mouth and passed on.

"How much money does a man like that earn in a day?" Stratford asked.

"About thirty cents."

"He could earn much more than that by using his muscle," Stratford said with some contempt in his voice. "If he did that sort of thing in Kishineff I don't blame the Russian government for not begging him to stay with them."

"That is no reason why he should be killed, or worse, by a drunken Tartar, and his women outraged," Boonton answered. "We will educate these people beyond this, and it is one of the things men like you can accomplish."

"All right, Boonton, old man. Go ahead with your demonstration," Stratford said politely. "I see very few men other than the venders about, however."

"The men and boys are at work. This street is crowded when the workshops of the great city shut down."

"How about the girls and young women? I see none of these either. I do not think I have seen a girl of over fourteen and under twenty-five since we started," Stratford said.

"They work, too," came the laconic answer.

A hubbub started at the street crossing ahead. Loud cries of protest could be heard, uttered in a peculiar jargon. A crowd of bewigged women,

bearded men, and young children formed in the center of the street. Stratford and Boonton forced their way through the rapidly increasing crowd. In the center they came upon two tall police officers who were emptying a pushcart of its load of vegetables. A youngish man in a blue serge suit, a neat derby hat, and tan walking gloves was directing the police officers' work. He smoked a cigarette and looked bored.

One of the police officers turned at this moment, and Stratford noted that he wore a Geneva cross on the sleeve of his coat, like a brassard worn by non-commissioned officers in the army.

"What in the world is this?" Stratford asked in astonishment.

"This is what is called a Health Department raid," Boonton answered. "They are carried out semi-occasionally."

Stratford picked up a cabbage head one of the officers had split open with his club. It was quite decayed at its center. A banana lay beside it, which also had undergone decomposition.

"It is almost impossible to make these people stop eating contaminated food," Boonton said. "These peddlers pick the stuff up at the markets for very little money and sell it to the poor. The authorities think that by destroying their stock they cause sufficient loss to the venders to make them stop this pernicious traffic. It does so for a time, but soon they try again. It is very regrettable, and perhaps more

so as the peddlers are Jews who do not seem to regard it as wrong to do evil to their own people."

The peddler who owned the stock just destroyed was lamenting very loudly. It was quite impossible for Stratford to make out what he was saying. He used the peculiar mixture of Russian and German which is called Yiddish. It is easily mastered by either a German or a Russian, but Americans find it very difficult to learn.

A stout Jew who was dressed quite in accord with American ideas pushed his way through the crowd to the side of the young man with the cigarette.

"This is a shame," he said in rather good English. "The man has an equity in this stock which you have no right to disregard."

A number of the people seemed to understand what the stout Jew said. Some of them assumed threatening attitudes and crowded close to the young man.

The young man took his cigarette from his mouth.

"I am an Health Department inspector," he said. He showed a shield fastened beneath the lapel of his coat. "Now go on about your business. Here, Maloney," he called to one of the officers, "collar that cart over there."

"No, you won't," the fat Jew put in, with a reddening face. "You must inspect first. There is a law in this country." He jostled the young man with the cigarette, which he had placed between his lips.

"Shall I 'phone for help?" Stratford asked, addressing the imperturbable young official.

"Help, hell!" was the answer. "Here, Maloney, fan this damned kike. He bothers me."

Maloney rapped the fat Jew's stomach with his club. Instantly the crowd separated. The stout Jew, however, became faint at once and sank to the pavement.

"H'ist him up, Maloney," the young man said calmly. Maloney hesitated. The young man grasped the fallen man by the collar. "That's an old game," he said, with a twinkle in his eye. "Here, get up!" He yanked the man to his feet.

"You have no right to brutalize him," Boonton put in. He frowned at the young man. "This is quite unnecessary. There are other ways ——"

"Now, Mr. Boonton," the young official interrupted blithely, "leave this job to me. He wants me to send for an ambulance so as to hold the game up until his peddler friends can get under cover. I know this fellow; he is an attorney who makes his living bleeding these poor kikes. Here," he added as he kicked the man into the crowd, "Get out! Vomoose! Beat it!"

The man disappeared. The bystanders became silent. There were enough able-bodied men who had pushcarts about to annihilate the two police officers and the young man with the cigarette. They stood by their carts, however, with no protest beyond the pleading jargon they had employed when the fat Jew

first interfered. The momentary rebellion aroused by the abortive effort of the fat Jew was crushed as soon as born, and this by a young man with a blue serge suit and a cigarette.

"I would like to have to recruit a regiment of infantry from this bunch," Stratford said with manifest contempt in his voice.

"Come, let us go," Boonton said, with a little sigh of despair.

As they turned away the young man with the tan gloves was firing a fresh cigarette from a match a bearded peddler held for him.

The men went on. The street was littered with destroyed food—fish, chickens, geese, fruit and vegetables. Several street cleaners in white duck uniforms were sweeping the stuff into an open sewer hole. A number of bearded men stood quietly by their empty pushcarts; none of them made any protest. A large number of women and children lined the sidewalks on either side, making it difficult for the two men to push their way on.

Overhead the buildings presented a peculiar aspect. The fire escape balconies were covered with feather beds, blankets, refuse pots, and occasionally a wooden box in which some inmate was growing sick-looking geranium plants interspersed with garlic.

"Come in here," Boonton said suddenly. "We will call on the Russaks."

He led the way through a door between two shops into a narrow hallway. Stratford struck a match,

lighting up for an instant the dim passage. His attention was attracted to a paper placard nailed to the wall.

"That is a notice directing what to do with refuse, ashes, etc.," Boonton explained as Stratford attempted to read the notice. "The Fire Department has charge of this sort of thing and orders all inmates to keep the fire escapes, hallways, and staircases free from obstruction. The notice is printed in several languages. You noticed as we came along how little attention is paid to it. Yet it would be a simple matter for the property owners to pay men to see that the law is enforced. At times we have a terrible calamity in one of these tenements. Fire breaks out and the tenants are burned to death like rats in a trap. Then the newspapers howl protest at the city departments or some playwright makes the thing the basis of exploiting a problem in sociology. It's ghastly."

"What's the matter with the people obeying the law?" Stratford asked. "Great Heavens, if I had any kids of my own I'd try to keep that danger away from them."

"That is true. But these people do not understand. They will in time. In the meantime a little sacrifice on part of the landlords would be of great help."

"Well, if the property owners have to hire men for the purpose of seeing that the law is enforced,— a very law framed for these people's protection,—

their pay should logically come out of the tenants' pockets in the form of increased rent," Stratford answered, with a little acridity in his voice. "Then I suppose the tenants would hold an indignation meeting and vote the landlord a thief."

"These tenements represent the best paying real estate in the country," Boonton said. "The owners can afford it all right. The trouble is it's cheaper to bribe the legislators not to enact laws to compel the property owner to see that the law is enforced, or to prevent some such solution as I indicate. But come on. We will look farther."

Boonton led the way to the end of the long hall. The staircase was barely visible in the semi-darkness. Boonton went on ahead. On the second flight of stairs he stumbled.

"Hello, what's this?" he cried. He struck a match, revealing a little girl of seven. She rested her hand on the balustrade. Beside her on the step stood a pail of coal over which Boonton had stumbled.

"Why, this is little Caroline Russak," Boonton said. "Why are you carrying up the coal?"

"Bennie is at the college yet," the child answered. "Father has a lot of coats to press. So he sent me."

The match burned out and darkness again closed in. Boonton picked up the pail.

"Run on ahead," he said, with his kindly voice. "I'll carry up the coal."

The child made no answer, but went on ahead. Stratford followed. Boonton carried the pail with his deformed hand, which possessed remarkable strength, no doubt due to the fact that all muscular efforts were attended with added expenditure of strength, the outcome of lack of adroitness in executing a manipulation. Dim as the light was Stratford noticed this, and seeing how ready Boonton was to use his afflicted member in the darkness of the stairway, felt much the same emotion which had actuated him when he first saw Boonton on the veranda of the boat-house back in the college days. A vision of Boonton conserving the strength of his normal hand by doing a certain amount of work with the deformed one when alone and unobserved came into his mind. He did not volunteer to carry the pail, however, feeling that perhaps after all disregard of an affliction at times has its justification, in which he was quite right, as all who have an incurable affliction keenly appreciate.

On the next flight of stairs the light became somewhat better, flitting down through a skylight in the roof. As they ascended the light increased, and when the top was reached one could see quite plainly. The child entered a door at the back of the house. There was a similar door immediately beside it, evidently leading to another apartment. At the front of the house two similar doors led to the abodes of two more families. Boonton entered after the girl. Stratford hung back.

"Come in, Stratford," Boonton called. "I want you to meet Mr. Russak."

Stratford entered a room which had a large stove in it. Most of the top of the stove was occupied by large tailors' irons. A small section was taken up by a black iron pot in which a mixture of meat and vegetables was simmering. A little of the contents bubbled over as Stratford came in, sizzling for a moment as the drops ran across the hot cover, and giving rise to a heavy disagreeable odor like boiled cabbage. Boonton went on to a larger room beyond. It had two windows running across the back of the house. One more room adjoined the first center one. It was quite dark, obtaining light only from the windows in the rear room. Most of the space was occupied by a large bed covered with a thick feather quilt.

Stratford followed Boonton into the rear room. A man about forty-five years of age sat at a sewing machine. His hair was long and unkempt, as was his beard, much on the order of those worn by the peddlers in the street. He wore a flannel undershirt open at the neck, loose fitting baggy trousers which were not held in place with either belt or suspender, and slippers. He rose slowly as the men came in and advanced toward them.

"Oh, Mr. Boonton," he said, "it is good of you to come. Carrie has made you carry the coal. Well, she is a little lazy; we must all help a little."

He took the pail from Boonton, who had changed

it to his sound hand as he entered, and carried it to the middle room where he deposited it beside the stove.

"This is my friend Mr. Stratford," Boonton said as the man came back. "He is looking around among my people."

Stratford shook hands with the man. Russak lowered his shoulders a little, but looked keenly at the visitor with a pair of deep set, dark eyes. His features were heavy, the nose large and thick, the eyebrows heavily marked. When he spoke he revealed large yellow teeth. He led the way toward the windows. Stratford noticed that he limped, and on closer scrutiny discovered that one foot was bandaged.

"You have an injured foot?" Stratford asked.

"No," Russak answered, "I have a sore on the bottom of my foot."

"He has an affliction," Boonton explained, "which men who work the pedal of a sewing machine for a long time frequently develop. It is due to a disease of the nerves. It is very painful. The doctors say it comes from poor nourishment. They call it an 'occupation neurosis,' whatever that may mean. I fancy it's like a writers' cramp. It is not a leprosy, but is something on that order. However, it is not contagious. Rest in the country and good food cure it, it is said."

Russak sighed.

"Yes," he said. "A professor from the college

came down to see me. He told me to go into the country. It is like ordering champagne for a tramp."

He smiled faintly at his comparison, revealing his long yellow teeth. He lifted some clothing in the process of completion from two wooden chairs. "Sit down, gentlemen," he said. He seated himself at his machine.

Little Caroline had remained standing near the door. She was a rather pretty child, with great dark eyes surrounded with remarkably long eyelashes. Her skin was very fair, though the cheek was a trifle sunken. She wore a plaid dress, black stockings, and heavy, thick-soled shoes, one of which had a badly fashioned patch covering the greater part of the toe portion of the upper. The stockings were evidently held up with tapes, for one end of a thin white band hung below the left knee. Her hair was quite ragged-looking and hung in wisps over her forehead and on the shoulders.

A short stout woman in a gingham waist and cloth skirt came in. She wore a wig, and had a wrinkled yellow face in singular contrast to the huge bust which sagged down, causing the gingham waist to hang below the waist-band of the skirt. She carried an infant in her arms.

"Go in the street, Carrie," she said to the child. "It is after three o'clock and the school inspector won't say nothing now any more."

The child went out.

"This is my wife," Russak said simply, waving his hand toward the woman.

The men shook hands with the woman. She shifted the baby in her arms as she held out her hand, resting it in a peculiar way on her abdomen, which she protruded forward by leaning her shoulders backward.

"What did the doctor say about the baby?" Russak asked.

"The doctor was not in any more," she answered. "He will be here in the house soon. I asked Mrs. Bernstein to send him up when he comes to see her. Anyway, he don't charge any more than for in the office, when he has two to see in the same house."

The woman spoke English quite well. Stratford asked her how long she had been in America.

"Twenty-five years," she answered. "I married Russak the first year I was here. He was a fine healthy man then."

She declined the chair Boonton offered her and disappeared into the dark chamber with the large bed and the feather quilt. In a few moments she returned and busied herself at the stove.

"Well, you have a hard time of it, do you not?" Stratford said, turning to Russak.

Russak had sat quite still for some time. He had his face half turned toward the light and rested one hand on his sewing machine like a laborer who leans on his shovel to get a moment's rest.

"It is a hard world," Russak answered slowly. "I have four children. My Myra is the oldest. She works in a shop. Bennie the next one is a bright boy. I send him to the free college. When he comes home he helps with the clothing. He carries what we make to the shop in the morning. Nights he studies. Carrie goes to the school. The baby is now two years old. It is a girl too. She is sick now. The mother nurses her yet, to save something on the table. Maybe that is why she is sick. My wife is not a young woman any more."

"It would be more help to you if Bennie did not go to college, would it not?" Stratford asked.

"Yes, maybe," Russak answered. "But he must get an education. I do not want him to be a tailor. Look at me." He pointed at his disabled foot. "I left Russia because they would not let me learn something."

"Won't they let you study in Russia?" Stratford asked.

"No. Only a small number of us Jews may go to school there. The Tsar don't want us educated."

He dropped his voice the least bit when he mentioned the Tsar.

"Where did you learn English? You speak it quite well," Stratford asked next.

"I went to the night school here after I was married. Josephine my wife was ambitious too. Then came the children. I had to give it up."

"But it would perhaps make it possible for you to go to the country and get well if the boy worked," Stratford suggested.

"Maybe yes. But I am already an old man. My Bennie is much to me. When he studies nights I sit and sew—sometimes until two o'clock in the morning. When I am dead he may yet be a great man. My Myra worries me more. She has not been home for two nights. I don't know where she is."

"Why did you not let me know of this?" Boonton asked.

Russak hung his head. "I am afraid," he answered in an undertone. He gave a furtive glance in at the stout wife who was stirring the stew in the big iron pot beside the tailors' irons. "It happened before. She said she had stayed with a girl from the shop where she works. But I am afraid ——"

A knock at the door stopped him. The same moment a tall, thin man with a clean-shaven face entered without waiting for a summons to do so. He kept his hat on as he came forward.

"Where is the sick baby?" he asked. He spoke English with a Jewish accent, though this was more discernible as an intonation than a distinctive accent.

Mrs. Russak stepped toward him. "She is in the bed. Come, doctor, I'll show you."

The physician followed the woman into the bedroom, from which he could be heard talking in a low

voice. The men in the rear room sat still so as not to disturb the doctor's work. Presently he came out of the room. His examination did not seem to require much time. He stepped to the table near the window opposite to the one where Russak and his machine were. Russak gave him his chair, wiping it off first with the palm of his hand. The physician wrote rapidly on a pad, tore off the leaf and handed it to the mother, who had followed from the bedroom and stood now watching the doctor's face as he wrote.

The man's face was quite imperturbable. He did not pay the least attention to the other occupants of the room, who sat very still. He rose now and placed the pad in his pocket.

"Give the medicine every two hours, and remember about the diet," he said.

"You charge me fifty cents?" the woman asked him.

"Yes. You know that's my charge. If you can't pay it come to the dispensary—it costs you nothing there."

Mrs. Russak counted out the money. The doctor watched her narrowly. Stratford noticed that the woman placed a silver quarter of a dollar, two dimes, and then more rapidly several coppers into the man's hand.

"There are only four cents here," the doctor said quietly.

He did not seem in the least annoyed. The

remark was made without any change of voice or expression of countenance. The woman handed over the other penny.

"Let me know if you want me again," the doctor said in the same even voice.

In another moment he was gone without further ceremony.

"Well, that penny was two per cent. I might have made it if I had luck," the mother said with a bare movement of the corners of her mouth which suggested an abortive smile. She sighed and went back to the black pot.

Russak laughed for the first time since the men came in.

"My wife," he said, "she is clever with the money. The doctor was too smart for her. Well, every little thing like that helps. She will not buy now the evening paper."

Boonton was visibly annoyed.

"I sometimes feel that this sort of thing is the reason why your people are discriminated against," he said with some sharpness in his voice, a characteristic he rarely let creep into his speech. "If you did not mean to pay the doctor his fee you should not have sent for him, or at least told him you would not pay the full fee."

"We are an oppressed people," Russak answered meekly. The momentary gleam of brightness had disappeared from his eyes as Boonton spoke. "That was only what your people in Wall Street call high



finance. The doctor does a big business. A penny is nothing to him."

"But he is a Jew, is he not?" Stratford queried.

"He is a reformed Jew—a what you call a backslider. We get all we can from them," Russak answered with a momentary flash in his dark sombre eyes.

He fingered the partly finished garment on his machine. His face took on again the set expression of men who labor constantly at a work which requires no effort of the mental faculties. He sat down now on the chair he had loaned the doctor, after placing it near the sewing machine. Then he rested his bandaged foot on the iron frame and leaned over in much the same attitude he had occupied when the men first entered the room. The daylight grew dim from the shadow of an enormous chimney rising from a power house at the rear of the tenement. He brushed the disheveled hair from his forehead and passed his large thick fingers across his eyes as though his sight needed clearing.

Stratford rose to go. That moment the door leading to the hall opened. Russak's bent figure straightened up.

"Ach, Bennie!" he cried with more animation in his voice than he had yet shown, "you are late."

A boy of fifteen strode rapidly toward the elder man. When he saw the visitors he took off his cap, which until then had rested on the back of his head. He was tall and slender, with regular features of the

Oriental Jewish type. Thick, dark, slightly curly hair covered his head. The cheek was somewhat sunken, and like his younger sister the complexion was clear.

"I am sorry, father," he said in a clear loud voice as though speaking to one who had defective hearing—a habit persons have of raising their voices when talking to workers in machine shops, and the rattle of Russak's sewing machine no doubt made it necessary to address him in a loud voice most of the time.

The lad shook hands with the visitors. He wore a neat suit, and a clean white collar showed above the tightly buttoned jacket. The trousers were a trifle short, but the shoes were good. He turned now and laid a number of books, which he had held under his arm as he came in, on the edge of the mantel close to a jar of herring which were soaking in water to extract the excess of salt.

Boonton asked the boy how he was getting on in college.

"Very well," he answered. "I expect to pass my examinations soon. I have worked hard for a long time."

He stepped to the window opposite to where his father's sewing machine stood. A cloud of thick smoke from the chimney of the power house blew against the window panes. Some cinders struck audibly against the glass.

"When I am old enough I will be a lawyer," he

said with a darkening face. "Then I will make them stop using soft coal for their power houses. We have to keep the windows closed all the time or the soot will stain the clothing we make."

His eyes brightened up as he looked at his father. Russak returned the glance with intent admiring eyes. "Yes," he said, "my Bennie will help his people." Then suddenly dropping his voice he asked: "Bennie, did you go to the shop?"

"Yes, father. Myra was laid off this afternoon. They have not very much to do at the shop. Business is very bad."

"Bennie," Russak said, still in a whisper, "don't deceive your father. Was she to-day there—in the shop?"

"I did not ask," the lad answered, though he lowered his head and looked at the floor.

"Don't lie to your old father, Bennie."

The lad remained silent, still looking down at the deal floor with its collection of woolen nap between the boards.

"Don't worry yourself," Boonton put in kindly. "She will be home soon. We must not keep you any longer from your work."

Russak lifted his bandaged foot and placed it on the foot pedal of his machine. That moment the door opened and Myra came in.

"Here she is now," Boonton cried.

Russak had already slid the edge of the garment under the bread winning needle.

The girl came slowly forward. "Hello, mother!" she said as she came through the center room. The mother had seated herself beside the stove with the tailors' irons and the big black pot. She had begun to peel some potatoes which she placed in a little heap on a newspaper laid on a wooden chair beside her.

"Come in, Myra," Boonton called as the girl hesitated on the door-sill. "I want you to meet Mr. Stratford."

The girl had her head held slightly downward at first, but now lifted it and looked up at Stratford, who had risen as she came in. The face was quite the same as Bennie's, but the cheek was round and full. The skin was singularly fair and the thick dark hair curved over the forehead and waved at the temples, concealing the upper portion of the ears. A large hat with thick feathers sat somewhat rakishly on her head. A portentous amber hat pin held the hat in place. She wore a gown of black cloth, which lay close to a full, well-moulded figure. The skirt was short, reaching barely beneath the tops of quite dainty high-heeled boots. As she lifted her face Stratford noted that a little rim of white powder showed in the crease at the side of the nose where it meets the cheek. A faint odor of perfume dominated for a moment the smell from the iron pot into which the mother had just dropped some of the potato slices. The lobes of the girl's ears were punctured, though she wore no ear-rings. The lobe of

the right ear was a trifle red, as though the ornament had been recently removed.

"It is time you came home," Russak said, before Stratford had finished greeting the girl. "It is not much of a home, but it's better than running about God knows where."

"I don't care who knows where I go," the girl answered facing her father. She spoke in a high pitched not unpleasant voice, which, like Bennie's, she raised to a seemingly unnecessary volume. "I make my own living."

"You were at the shop all day to-day?" Russak asked.

The sick infant in the dark chamber began to wail. The mother left her potatoes and went to it, closing the door after her.

"Yes, I was at the shop," the girl answered, though she looked at the floor when she said it.

"Perhaps she was," Bennie put in hastily. "The man may have been mistaken."

"So you have been spying on me," the girl cried, raising her head. Her voice had some menace in it. "Very well. I don't care what you find out. I am of age. I am my own mistress."

Russak rose slowly from his chair and stood beside his machine, resting the bandaged foot with the slipper on the iron frame. His back was turned to the now fast failing daylight. He raised his left hand and rested the right on the unfinished garment. The bent shoulders straightened up and the figure,

with its open flannel undershirt and badly fitting trousers, seemed to expand and dilate until it towered menacingly over the others.

"Yes, you are of age," he began in a voice strangely quiet and subdued, in contrast to his pose and the menace in the raised hand with its long dark hair and encrusted finger nails. "You are my oldest living child. I have raised you up in this free country to meet womanhood as befits your race." The peculiar method of expression of his people seemed to fade and the diction of the night school he had attended so many years ago crowded into his speech like an automatic function, long dormant, yet called to life by his rebellious emotions.

"Pardon me, Mr. Russak," Stratford said gently. "Please excuse me. I would rather not be present during this interview."

"Yes, let us go," Boonton added, reaching for his hat.

"You need not go, gentlemen," Russak answered. He still held his hand up. "You have come here, Mr. Stratford, to get a lesson from my people. You shall have it."

He turned again to the young woman with the rakish hat and the rim of powder. She did not move, but stood looking defiantly up into the man's bearded face.

"When you were born," Russak went on, "I thanked God that you came into the world in the new country, away from the Russian police spies,

away from the drunken Tartars who made prostitutes of my people by force. I slaved at this machine," he patted the iron bread winner, "I brought you up by the teachings of my faith. You went to the school. I was proud when the time came to pay a small tax to the government, for when the man told me it was for education I paid it with a thought for you. And now how have you done? You worked in the shop. Yes, that is so, but that was not enough for you. You must have the same as those who are over you." Russak's voice had become gradually louder. He raised it higher still now, and waving his hand through the air he added: "I am an old Jew tailor. Yes, an old Jew tailor—but, by God, I am, too, an honest man. I want no harlots around me ——"

The mother came in from the bedroom.

"Leopold, my husband, What are you saying?" she cried frantically. "God in heaven, you are speaking to your daughter, our child, our eldest. Oh, Leopold, please don't!"

She stepped close to him and took the hand which he now dropped by his side into her potato-stained fingers. Russak's shoulders dropped. He seemed quite exhausted and he raised his bandaged foot from the iron machine frame like a lame horse after a hard drive.


"Don't stop him, mother," the girl broke in vehemently. "Suppose I am a bad woman. Suppose I am. What of it? Did I not carry Carrie in my arms? Did

I not wash every day Bennie? Have I not worked so that Bennie could go to the college? Yes," she shrieked violently, "so that Bennie can go to college. That's it. To satisfy father's ambition for his son. Women do not count when a son must be made a lawyer. But I will not do it any more. I will go. I will leave here. It would have been better to be born in Vilna, back in your hated Russia. Then you need not have sacrificed even your daughter to your son's education."

Russak's figure seemed to shrivel. He sat heavily down on his wooden chair, resting his arm again on the sewing machine.

"Do you mean to say," Bennie said, stepping toward his sister, "do you mean to say that I am at fault in this? Do you mean that if I had not gone to college that you would have been satisfied with your home as it is? You have not been happy with us for some time, Myra." The boy's voice broke and tears rose to his great luminous eyes. "I saw it long ago," he went on with less vehemence. "When father and I worked here at night and you were not home I knew something was wrong with you. I could not make more money by going out to work than I do by helping father. It is not beneath me to help press the clothes. No, Myra, my sister, I am not the fault in this. You must look at yourself ——"

"You are a selfish pig!" the girl broke in violently. "You are! You are! When you are a great lawyer,



like father wants, then think that you made it because I had to go to the shop."

"Myra, my dear child," Boonton interrupted. He stepped between the children and laid his deformed hand on the girl's shoulder. The girl hung her head. "Come," he went on very gently, "you do not mean what you say." He pushed her chin up with the other hand. "Look how broken your father is, and see your mother." He waved his hand toward the woman, who had sunk to her knees beside Russak's wooden chair. She rested her bewigged head on her husband's knee over the bandaged foot. Tears ran down the wrinkled cheek. In the momentary silence a faint whimper became audible. Bennie turned toward the window, where again the cinders and the heavy thick smoke smudged the glass.

"It is too late, Mr. Boonton," the girl answered almost in a whisper. She looked like a hunted animal. Terror suddenly stole into her face. The large beautiful eyes dilated and she clasped her hands together over her breast and looked furtively over her shoulder, like a frightened child who fears without knowing what menaces it. "I will go, Mr. Boonton. I will not come again. God help me!"

She crept softly toward the door. Russak put his hairy hand on the bewigged head at his knee. It grew yet darker in the room. A sob escaped from the boy's lips. Little Caroline came in. The elder girl stopped down and kissed her on the thin cheek, the child looking up with wonder in her obtrusive

eyes. The sick infant in the dark chamber wailed feebly. The elder girl stole out and softly closed the door. The big black pot bubbled over. The smell of boiled cabbage again filled the room. One of the tailors' irons emitted brilliant sparks as the water from the pot touched its red edge.

Stratford and Boonton went out. On the corner of the next street they saw Myra Russak get into a taximeter. As the car made the turn they caught a glimpse of a man with a glistening top hat and tan overcoat sitting beside the girl's black cloth gown and the rakish hat with its thick feathers.

CHAPTER V

STRATFORD applied himself assiduously to the study of the condition of the laboring classes, the question of public-school education, the problems of improvement of the hygienic conditions under which the poorer classes live, and allied topics. In all directions he was confronted by the disquieting conclusion that legislation had been adequately indulged in and that relief from existing conditions was more largely a matter of enforcing the law rather than modifying the existing ones or formulating new ones.

In his investigations Boonton was of great service to him, and the two men spent many days and nights gathering material for the speeches and magazine articles Stratford used as propaganda. Some of these involved denunciation of the methods employed by the organization which seemed ready to obtain his nomination, and, strange as it appeared to Stratford, Cosgrove met his first allusion in this connection with a peculiar smile.

"Go as far as you like, old man," he said in answer to Stratford's question as to whether his course would not lessen his desirability on part of the organization he was affiliated with. "Later in life you will see that we make reformers, get them elected to office, and leave the rest to fate," Cosgrove added.

"Well, your fate will not be so desirable as you seem to think," Stratford retorted hotly. "I am not to be goaded one moment and placated the next."

An answer which made Cosgrove smile again and shrug his enormous shoulders.

Several days after Stratford's visit to Mildred Fuller's house he received a note from her. It was written in large angular characters and correctly spelled. She asked him to come to see her soon, that she had had something new come into her life, something she could not just classify, but perhaps after a time she would understand better. She also promised to be good and not display any more anger or annoyance.

Stratford sent her a polite reply, and a few days later, while going about with Boonton, suggested that they call on her. He had told Boonton of his escapade, which his friend had listened to without comment. The two men presented themselves at the little house near the river. It was quite late, indeed near midnight, when they arrived. Boonton expressed some reluctance at making so late a visit, but Stratford insisted, and Boonton, with his peculiar elasticity of temperament when asked to please another, consented to go in.

As they mounted the steps leading to the house the door opened and Cosgrove stepped out. He frowned slightly when he saw Stratford, but in the next moment greeted him with a smile. Stratford presented Boonton to Cosgrove, who, however, had already

met the worker among his people, and the next moment performed the same ceremony with Miss Fuller, who stood in the open doorway.

"Come back, Mr. Cosgrove," the girl called as Cosgrove stepped down from the little landing at the top of the steps. "Now that you have given me your little lecture, you might help me make it agreeable for my visitors."

Cosgrove shook his head, and with a curt nod went on his way. Stratford and Boonton went in and were led into the living-room at the front of the house by the girl. She wore a street gown of dark gray cloth, boots of the high heeled variety, but no jewelry. Her thick dark hair was parted in the center and gathered in a formidable coil at the back of the head. She took the men's hats and coats, and as Stratford handed her his cane her fingers closed for an instant over his hand.

"So this is the famous Mr. Boonton," she said, smiling up into the tall minister's face. "I have heard much of you and your work."

She had the natural feminine instinct to make herself agreeable to the friend of a man she wished to interest. Boonton looked her straight in the eyes with the analytical stare men use who depend upon their observation for a conclusion of characteristics rather than upon the opinions given by others.

"It is good of you to speak of it," he answered simply.

Miss Fuller had accepted his scrutiny with the

composure of a woman who has been frequently subjected to that sort of thing, and held his eyes with hers until politeness made Boonton look away. She handed the men's things to the maid, who appeared at this moment, and asked her visitors to be seated. Boonton stepped to a slender stiff-backed chair which stood close to the door, but she took him by the arm of the hand he kept in his pocket and led him to a large comfortable chair close beside a goodly sized grand piano. She showed some artfulness in this, as the only source of light in the room came from a tall lamp which stood close to where she placed Boonton, and thus was able to see him much better than he could her. She turned now to Stratford, who had remained standing, and flashed a quick smile up into his face.

"I am honored by two such distinguished guests," she said, still smiling. "Do sit down, here on the divan." She indicated a comfortable-looking sofa. "I will share it with you, if I may." She pushed Stratford down with her hands on his shoulders, and sat beside him.

The room was singularly plainly furnished. Besides the chairs, the sofa and the piano there was no other furniture. Even the almost inevitable cabinet with the heterogeneous collection of ivory miniatures and souvenirs of various kinds was absent. The floor was covered with a dead green carpet. Several small tables stood about close to large chairs. One held a vase with a few red carnations arranged

in artistic disorder. One of the flowers had a broken stem and hung its head quite down to the little lace cover of the table on which the vase stood. The walls were decorated with a few oil paintings, one a Zouave lighting a cigarette. It was well done, showing the seared face of an old campaigner strongly illuminated by the match he held with one bare hand while he protected the light with the other, which was covered with a glove. A remarkably good copy of Meissonier's "Friedland 1807" in color caught Boonton's attention.

Miss Fuller noted his interest. "I am glad you like it," she said. "It was done by a young artist. I study it often myself," she added as she rose and turned toward the picture, which hung immediately over Stratford's head. She rested one hand on Stratford's shoulder as she leaned toward it. "That hussar with the bugle has always fascinated me. You see"—she held out her shapely hand toward the canvas—"he is a hussar and is acting as a guide to a regiment of cuirassiers. To me that means that more than one regiment are in the review. It gives the idea of the immensity of military power. Maybe it means a brigade or perhaps a division of cavalry, and he must be the left guide. Then, too, his horse's nostrils are wide open, as though he had been ridden a long distance and the review must be almost over. But I must not burden you with my vagrant thoughts. Come, Jim—I may call you Jim? Light a cigarette." She had left her hand on Strat-

ford's shoulder as she spoke, and now turned quickly toward one of the little tables. "You too must smoke," she added as she held a small rosewood box toward Boonton.

Her voice had suddenly softened. As she leaned over, a tear splashed on the polished edge of the box. Boonton looked up quickly. She brushed her hand over her eyes and smiled bravely into his face.

"I hope nothing has happened to distress you," Boonton asked, with his usual gentleness in his voice.

"Come, Jim, take a cigarette." She laughed quite gayly. "You sit there like an old bear." She sat down beside him. "I'll tell you all about it. Cosgrove has been lecturing me. Said you had a great future and he did not wish me to 'butt in.' Well, I'm not going to bite you. I told him that. You are not an infant in arms. If you don't want to come to see me, I can't make you, can I?"

"How did he know I was here at all?" Stratford asked.

"I told him myself. That is, he asked me yesterday what we did the night we left his place. I told him I took you—I mean you took me home. He started to say something about it, but I ran out. To-night he came here and raised hell—as he calls it. He's an infernal old crab, and I told him so," she added with a little pout.

The men laughed, but made no answer. The silence became prolonged. A frightened look flitted over the girl's face for an instant, but was quickly

replaced with a smile. She rose suddenly and sat down at the piano. The light from the lamp shone full on her face. The cheek was slightly flushed, enhancing the whiteness of the neck. Her gown was cut slightly lower than is usually worn with a street gown, giving a glimpse of the indenture between the collar bones. The piano was situated so as to cause the player to face the room. She ran her hand over the keys, striking a sonorous chord.

"I'll sing you a dago song from Verdi—or would you rather have rag time?" She suddenly broke into a medley of negro melodies. In the next instant she struck a chord of one of Chopin's tuneful sonatas.

"You have much talent," Boonton broke in. He was genuinely fond of music and rose now and stood beside her.

"Sit down here on this bench with me," she said, pushing the seat toward him. Boonton sat down and watched her white, well-made hands go back and forth over the keys. She had much skill, and a firm almost masculine touch, quite in contrast to the slender hands. Soon she held a solitary note well down in the lower register.

Stratford bent over to reach for a fresh cigarette.

"Leave him here when you go," she whispered. The hands crashed down in a surge of notes. She looked at Boonton's thin strong deeply lined face. He nodded his head. Suddenly she played the prelude of Schubert's "Farewell."

"I am a Catholic," she said, with an astonishing

note of pathos in her voice. "The rector of my parish asked me to sing it once at a burial ceremony. I have a strange feeling of depression to-night. I can't shake it off. I will sing it for you."

She did it remarkably well, reaching the one high note with no manifest effort. Boonton watched her white throat as she held the note, which came out round and full through her red lips. It caused a disquieting thought to steal into his mind. He rose, however, when the song was finished.

"I must be on my way," he said. He held out his left hand. The girl took it in both of hers.

"Help me with him," she pleaded.

"I'm going, Stratford," Boonton said, turning toward his friend.

"All right. We'll trot along," Stratford said, rising from the divan.

"You are not going yet, Jim," the girl put in hastily. "I want to talk to you."

"I'll excuse you, Stratford," Boonton said quietly. "I don't go in your direction, anyway, and I do not mind in the least going home alone."

He reached for his coat, which Miss Fuller quickly brought in from the hall. He took his deformed hand from his pocket for the first time since he entered. With his peculiar sensitiveness he had slipped it through the sleeve of his overcoat when he first came in and stuck it at once into the pocket of his jacket.

Stratford helped him on with the coat. The girl

watched the added effort required to force the hand through the sleeve with a wave of pity in her heart. When she bade Boonton good night there was a quite discernable tenderness in her voice, which made him wince despite the many, many times he had heard it in his life.

The girl saw the look of pain in his face, and the next moment laughed very gayly and gave the departing man an old-fashioned courtesy, which she executed with some grace and also relieved him of the necessity of shaking hands with her. On the threshold Boonton smiled quite warmly into the girl's laughing eyes and passed out and on into the dimly lighted street.

"Now, then, you old bear," the girl cried as she door closed, "kiss me." She sprang into Stratford's arms.

He led her to the sofa and sat beside her. The light from the lamp illuminated but dimly the corner where they were. She asked him about his work, leading him along with many artful questions.

"Tell me," he said suddenly. "What did Cosgrove say to you?"

"I have already told you. He seemed to think our acquaintance would be a prejudice to your success. I can't see it that way. I am not a fool. I know where I belong. It can do you no harm to come here, and it is very lonesome here alone down by the river."

"I think the entire matter has taken on a more

important aspect than it deserves," Stratford answered slowly. "You will pardon my saying this."

The girl became grave as she listened. The same frightened look came into her eyes as when the men first came in. She held her head down and fumbled the cloth of her skirt. Stratford took her hand and kissed it. She pressed it firmly against his lips. He rose the next instant.

"It is getting late," he said quietly. "I too must be on my way."

She rose with him and bade him good-by. "Do not stay too long away from me," she whispered. Her eyes filled with tears, but she kept her back to the light so that Stratford might not see them, nor did she speak again for fear he might hear them in her voice. In the next moment she held the door open and watched him disappear rapidly into the mist which had stolen into the air from the near by river.

CHAPTER VI

THE next morning Boonton called at the Hersey home. As he entered Hersey came along the hall.

"I did not expect to find you in at this hour," Boonton remarked after the men had exchanged greetings. "It is after ten o'clock, and I know you to be a man of rigid habits."

"Perhaps I am," Hersey answered, "but I have been wrestling with my old pest, Mr. Gout, and did not rest until late in the night, so I over-slept. He is an exacting tyrant. However, after all I invited him originally myself. Sent him a card in the form of some very good rum. So I guess I'll have to accept him now as a steady caller. But come into the library. Jim is finishing breakfast."

Hersey led the way into the library.

"I sent you an invitation to dine with us next Thursday," Hersey said as he lowered himself carefully into his favorite chair. "I fancy you will find it in your mail to-day. Bessam and his daughter Katherine are coming. Do you know the Bessams?"

"No. I have heard Jim speak of Miss Bessam, however," Boonton answered. He declined the cigarette Hersey offered him from a very flat plain leather case.

"Well, I owe Miss Katherine a dinner. It will bore you to death, no doubt. However, we must all

accept our burdens in life. My attorney is coming, too; he is a strong man in his field. In addition to that he is bringing his wife, who happens to look well in a low gown. I have invited no other women. I fancy Miss Katherine can take care of several men who are polite enough not to be too brilliant at the table. She's been in the running long enough, the Lord knows. The other one usually makes men feel like literally falling on her neck, which is very white and full, and that helps. Besides that we go to the theater after dinner and that relieves the situation. Out of compliment to Bessam's residual plebeian taste I have seats at a comic opera. Be sure and come."

"I will be very glad to," Boonton answered, smiling at Hersey's interesting if somewhat radical characterization of his guests.

"Here is that new social and political saviour," Hersey said suddenly as he heard Stratford coming down the hall. "It's too bad he doesn't wear a long beard, let his hair drop to his shoulders, and cultivate a sad, far-seeing look in his eyes. I don't see how he could manage a halo, but he might try some game on that too."

Stratford heard the last remark.

"I am afraid that the tendency toward a tail and a cloven foot would prevent any success in that direction, my dear, sweet-tempered uncle. You forget the Hersey heritage," he said, as he shook hands with Boonton.

"That's the one thing that might help you out in the end," Hersey retorted, with a deep, hearty laugh. "You must not take me too seriously," he added, turning to the minister. "Jim and I have passages at arms like this as an aid to digestion. Believe me, it is better than any medication I know of." His face became suddenly grave. "I have at heart a great respect for your calling, Mr. Boonton," he said, as he rose quite briskly from his chair. "An experience of many years has not lessened it. I hope nothing ever will."

He lighted a cigarette and threw the match at a marble showing a woman drawing water from a spring, which conveyed the idea that artists believe women have to be very scantily clothed to draw water gracefully; and after a brief "Good-mornin'" passed out.

"What a forceful brilliant thing he is," Boonton said as he watched Hersey walk down the hall. "He would feel a bit disturbed, to say the least, if you did some foolish thing."

"I have not seen any great display of emotions on his part at any time," Stratford answered. "I have known him for many years. He is always absolutely imperturbable or perhaps at times a little unnecessarily facetious. He respects little beyond his pride. Again, I am not going to do anything foolish if I can help it. You mean the Fuller woman, of course."

"Jim," Boonton said in his quiet gentle voice, "I

have never taken the liberty of advising you." I walked to the window and looked thoughtfully at the spring sunshine. "I have had a peculiar admiration for you all these years. To me the king could do no wrong. I have seen slowly the awakening in you to a wider conception of life. Do not fail me now. We do not like to have our idols shattered." He turned to the center of the room and placed his poor hand on the back of a large velvet chair at his side. "I have not had much of woman in my life. You know how I rebel at accepting tolerance for my deviation from the normal." I moved with some difficulty the distorted fingers through the dark fabric. "This no doubt has been responsible for my unusual method of trying to make my life of some little use. Last night I watched that woman more carefully than either of you knew. She has remarkable allure." He stepped to Stratford's side, who had seated himself in Hersey's chair. "You are not different from other men, Jim," he went on in the same gentle voice, though he spoke very distinctly, like men of his calling always do even when the volume of the voice is lessened. "Maybe you have a different code than one of my kind. I have no fault to find with it. It is as old as history. Yet in this case you will not find it easy to end the matter at your pleasure. Let my fondness for you be my apology for speaking like this. Take it in time, Jim."

Stratford laughed.

"What an old pessimist you are," he said. "Dismiss the thing from your mind. Forget it, as I will when the time comes. Surely you are not accusing me of being in love with the woman?"

"No," Boonton answered slowly. "If that were true I would be less afraid. Love rules the universe, Jim, and we all forgive what love makes us do. This affair will not be so easily ended as you think now in your—may I say—arrogance. The girl is no ordinary creature of the streets. If she once has her affections seriously involved I would prefer not to have it on my conscience to be responsible for what it will make her do. Once more, Jim, I ask you to be careful."

"I believe you're smitten a bit yourself," Stratford answered laughingly. "Come along, we will go on our rounds. My coat is in the hall."

"I do not believe I would ever let my heart go where it should not," Boonton said as he followed Stratford out. "For me there is only one kind of woman. I did not take up this matter, however, from its moral aspects. That is not for me to sit in judgment on, much as I would like all womanhood left on the pedestal our ideals make for it. But I have said all there is to say, Jim. You are the arbitrator of your own destiny."

The two men went on and down to Boonton's Ghetto, where they worked each day and at times late into the night.

On the following Thursday Boonton arrived

sharply at the fifteen minutes before dinner required by form, acting in this regard as he did in everything. He found Hersey in the library. Evidently he had just finished dressing, for the white vest was very smooth and clean. He greeted Boonton in his usual way, dismissed the wolfhound with a curt order, and invited his guest to sit down and "lick up a cocktail," an offer Boonton declined.

In another moment the attorney came in, followed in a few minutes by his wife, who had devoted an instant or two to a few deft dabs with a powder puff. Stratford appeared before the greetings were over, and almost the same moment Bessam came in, leading Katherine by the hand.

"That's it. Lead her in, Bessam," Hersey called over from the mantel where he had placed himself in order not to have to bob his gouty back up and down as each guest entered. "What a gigantic fake you are. Behold, my friends, behold before you the man who from one week's end to the other does not have the remotest idea what his daughter is doing, lead her now by the hand as though presenting her for slaughter. Katherine, my dear child," he added in a tone of great humility, "I greet you."

He bowed quite low over her hand. Not without a flash out of the corner of his eye at the attorney's wife leaning over toward Stratford, who seemed to agree with Hersey as to the attractive qualities of the lady's neck.

Bessam laughed his sonorous hearty laugh.

"It is a fortunate circumstance, Hersey, that Katherine has inherited some of the Bessam incredulity, or I would be afraid to bring her here to listen to your distortion of truth," he said, still laughing.

"Even at my time of life I cannot escape feeling the involved compliment to myself in your timidity in this connection, my dear Bessam," came the ready answer. "I beg your pardon," Hersey caught himself with, "Miss Bessam, I present to you Mr. Carle Boonton. The Reverend Mr. Boonton who digs in the slums, preaches wonderful sermons, dabbles on the edge of politics, and last but not least is a great friend of Jim's."

Boonton bowed slightly. Bessam walked over to him and reached out his hand. There was a moment's hesitation as Boonton held out his left hand. The Bessams were presented to the attorney and his wife without comment as to characteristics. The attorney's wife remained seated, an American characteristic or at least a characteristic common in many American women which always made the corners of Hersey's mouth twitch, though be it said that usually he made some facetious allusion to it; but for some reason he let it go by this time without availing himself of the opportunity to air his natural trend.

Katherine greeted Stratford with one of those glances which only Balzac has described, and also one which did not escape Hersey's keen eyes. She wore a white dinner gown, which contrasted some-

what unfavorably with the black one worn by the attorney's wife. What it gained in conveying the idea of youthfulness was more than balanced by the exaggeration of the wearer's somewhat ample lines.

She bowed with some grace to Boonton, who had stepped to the side of the mantel opposite to Hersey. He found some difficulty in concealing his deformed hand when in evening clothes, as the malformation was too monstrous to be buried in the trousers pocket. He overcame the difficulty in a measure by keeping the hand gloved and held behind his back, and at the dinner kept it under the table. Both of these peculiarities soon called attention to the existence of some abnormality, which of course relieved him of painful explanations.

The attorney's wife had effectually corralled Stratford, and Boonton, like the elastic character he was, devoted himself to the newcomer.

Onshi served the cocktails. Hersey engulfed his at a gulp.

"I have refrained from having your usual stomach wash, Bessam," he said, turning to his old friend. "I know you hate to conform to decency and custom, but you can stand being polite just for once."

Bessam made a wry face.

"Come, Hersey," he said with some real annoyance in his face, "you are getting to be more and more of a tyrant every day."

He reached out for the cocktail Onshi held out to him on a tray.

"Stop, for Heaven's sake," Hersey laughed. "I just wanted to see how that whiskey and carbonic bluff of yours was getting on. Here, Onshi, give Mr. Bessam his usual little appetizer."

Onshi promptly brought the cold pint of champagne which Hersey had concealed behind the semi-nude marble lady who was still drawing water into her immovable jug.

The attorney's wife sipped her cocktail, but drew her lips in between sips, which conveyed the idea that her sense of taste was not offended, also that the sips did not occur at inordinately long intervals.

Katherine took her drink frankly, an indulgence she exercised with the view of dimming the odor of alcohol from the man who happened to sit beside her at the theater. She had been long enough at this sort of thing to use a certain art in obviating offensive emanations from her escorts, who inevitably whispered something in her ear during the play.

The attorney's wife refused to let Stratford get very far from her neck. Boonton noticed Katherine's glances in their direction. With all her worldly training Katherine was still the primitive woman. Once when the attorney's wife leaned quite close to Stratford a little furrow appeared between her eyebrows, and the placid face looked actually ominous.

Hersey, Bessam, and the attorney formed a little group by themselves. They had an extra cocktail between them. The attorney told a story in an un-

dertone. The finale made Bessam howl with laughter and Hersey roared out a good round laugh himself. The attorney was a small, sharp-featured man in the early fifties. An exacting professional career had made marriage a consideration of later life with him. He had selected his wife from the less affluent classes. She was twenty-five years his junior, beautiful, accomplished, and filled her place with the skill women have who are not burdened with overwhelming emotional factors in their marital relationship. He had put through enough deals for Hersey and his constituents to amass a fortune.

Onshi announced dinner. Hersey took Miss Bessam in and Boonton was awarded to the attorney's wife. Katherine sat at Hersey's right, with Boonton beside her. The attorney's wife sat between Boonton and Stratford. Bessam was placed between Hersey and the attorney. The conversation was general at first. Hersey had a brass fern dish in the center of the table.

"So as to make it possible for people to see each other," he remarked as Bessam commented on the "stinginess" of the table decorations. "This is not so agreeable when one sits opposite you, Bessam," Hersey concluded with, "but it is compensated for in this instance by my other guests." He bowed to the attorney's wife, who, however, was still engrossed in her "new man."

The answer brought forth a roar of good-natured

laughter from Bessam, who threw back his head, revealing his great strong teeth.

"Thank God!" he blurted back, "I am seated beside you, Hersey, and that collar that Katherine made me put on is so stiff I can't see you without more discomfort than I'll accept."

"What a sweet-tempered pair you are," Stratford put in. "I hope that when I get to a time commensurate with yours, I'll have a remnant of politeness left which I can dig up at odd times."

"If you do you'll be a liar," Hersey answered. "No two normally constituted individuals can ever stand each other for as many years as I have put up with this bloated cartoonists' model here on my left without softening the monotony of life with a series of fine fights. What say you, Bessam, old sport?"

"Right you are, Hersey! I can afford it, for usually I beat you to a frazzle, and that pleases my vanity. Of course it's a bit ignominious for you, old man. I realize that, and try to be magnanimous about it. I wouldn't have you feel bad for the world." A reply which called for a momentary gleam in Hersey's gray eyes, to be followed with a deep-toned incredulous laugh. He leaned over toward Bessam now, and placed his slender hand on his shoulder. Soon the two strangely mated friends were lost in an absorbing conversation. Boonton attempted to place his gardenia in his bottom hole with his left hand. Katherine saw his dilemma and

quickly came to his aid. The attorney's wife had already fixed Stratford's boutonniere for him.

"You are helping Jim in his campaign, Mr. Boonton," Katherine said, after patting the frail gardenia petals with her heavy hand, a habit most women have of rearranging the conformation of a flower in accord with their own ideas. A notion arising from the faulty belief that nature ever needs the assistance of feminine art, and is perhaps responsible for the fact that women of the great cities are at times mistaken for a kind of female not usually discussed in polite society. "You must be of great help to him," she added after effectually destroying the natural beauty of the flower.

"I expect him to be of great help to me," Boonton answered, with his almost automatic tendency toward self-effacement. "I imagine he will be able to do much for my poor."

"That reminds me, Jim," Bessam called across the table. "That fellow Hunter is making a great stir. They tell me that he is after the district attorneyship. Bright fellow, keen as a razor. Look to your laurels."

"What sort of a looking man is he?" the attorney's wife asked.

"I haven't seen him," Bessam answered. "Have you, Jim?"

"No; but I will soon. He was put up at the Automobile Club at the same time I was last week. I'll probably meet him there in a few days."

"I know about him," Hersey put in in his curt way. "Who is he?"

"He tried the Derocq murder case," the attorney volunteered. "You all remember it. An Algerian half-breed was charged with the murder of a woman in a cheap hotel on the river front. Hunter got his man off with a life sentence, though he had the entire police force and a couple of a thousand dollar a day experts against him. He comes from a good family. The men were all lawyers. Like yourself, Mr. Stratford, he is a newcomer in politics, and, too, a reformer."

"I have met him," Katherine interposed. "He has been doing afternoon teas. I met him with Miss Kane at the Morton tea. She has promised to bring him in on one of my days."

"Well, we will all get a chance to look him over then," Bessam said. "Let's go on with the grub, Hersey. I'm as hungry as one of Boonton's East Side kikes."

The dinner ran along smoothly after that, and Hersey addressed a polite remark to Miss Bessam at sufficiently frequent intervals not to appear unmindful of her presence. Most of the time he exchanged keen witticisms with Bessam, who laughed with absolute impartiality at Hersey's victories over himself as he did when he scored on his host.

Boonton was politely engaging. He was not an ideal dinner man. He preferred to watch the play of human emotions as a looker-on. Several times

Katherine leaned forward to speak to Stratford, who was lured from the attorney's wife's neck only with some difficulty. The attorney's wife wore a lavallière which terminated in a large pearl. The pearl had a tendency to roll into the little crease at the middle of the edge of her gown. At times she picked up the ornament between two dainty fingers and stuck it between her lips. She went on talking with the bauble in her mouth. When she dropped it a small streak of saliva smeared her skin. She wiped it off with her napkin, very deftly, so as not to make a contrast in the thin layer of perfumed powder with which her neck was covered. The gesture was accompanied by a challenging glance from the corner of her eye at Stratford.


Hersey served a sweetbread for the roast course. This did not call for the use of a knife, one of those unexpected thoughtful things men of his class do in order to save a guest a moment's pain. Boonton was at once mindful of the little act, and as he lifted his fork he flashed a grateful look at Hersey, who raised his glass at him across the table. The woman with the neck happened to see the softened look come into Hersey's eyes as he did it, and for a moment forgot to smile at Stratford, though she had not the remotest notion why she felt suddenly grave.

Katherine became silent. She watched Stratford flirt more and more boldly with the lady with the neck. She attributed the momentary look of gravity in the woman's face to something Stratford had

said, and wondered if it were really something worth the expression.

Boonton noted her annoyance. He wondered if she were in love with Stratford, whose square shoulders and well-made head would make most women proud of the sense of possession every woman feels when she loves a man. His eyes passed analytically over his neighbor. Involuntarily he compared her to Mildred Fuller. His judgment told him if it were a question of physical allure, that Stratford's choice would not be a difficult one. Miss Fuller's dark hair, her white smooth skin, the peculiar attractive quality of her voice, stood out in astonishing contrast to Katherine Bessam's heavy opulence. A vision of the woman beside him at forty came into his mind. He saw the primitive, faint trend toward her father's type. Bessam's vest had slid up on his paunch, revealing the waistband of his trousers. The wine had flushed his face and occasionally he wiped his bald head with his napkin.

Coffee was served at the table, and the women disappeared for a final prink and their wraps. Bessam lighted an enormous cigar, which he puffed with great vehemence with his engorged purple lips. He frowned heavily when Onshi announced the arrival of the wagonette. It was quite time to start for the theater, and Hersey, seeing Bessam's annoyance, placed him close to the door of the rig where he could puff his cigar out of the window. The attorney's wife assured Bessam that she loved the smell



of a good cigar, and Katherine was too well trained to offer any objection.

As a matter of fact the attorney's wife hung her gown up near an open window when she retired that night and characterized Bessam as a "rum-soaked fat pig" when the next day the gown still smelled of stale tobacco. A characteristic which makes observant men regard all women as liars, and very glad of it, too, when their comfort is conserved thereby.

The performance was of the usual comic opera type. A funny man who played opera with his legs, a prima donna who could not eliminate the Jewish intonation or her vowels even when she sang an Irish song, and a goodly display of more or less symmetrical legs crowned by utterly impossible coiffeurs, not a few of whose owners owed their existence to progenitors who had made clothing and sold shoe laces or peddled silk under garments to the demi-monde. A restricted portion of the women in the chorus occupied positions of somewhat greater prominence. They were six in number, and were listed on the programme as "show girls." The manager of the theater, who had the commercial instinct unusually well developed, had them subsidized by a fashionable dressmaker, who used this means of advertising the prevalent style of woman's attire—or that which the female portion of the audience regarded as indicative of what would be commonly worn during the coming season.

The prima donna wore a lock of hair at the side

of her head which was arranged in a peculiar way. This had been dignified by a special term in somewhat the same manner as a certain portion of a mechanism is named for its inventor in the commercial arts.

"I regard that curl of hair as justifiable on the ground that it conceals at least one of those atrocious ears," Stratford said to Katherine after the prima donna had worn it long enough to remove the thought from the masculine mind that it was due to carelessness in dressing the hair.

Katherine had contrived to place Stratford beside her, and had banished the attorney's wife to Bes-sam. The latter seemed as much interested in her neck as Stratford had been, and his manifest admiration was received with equal tolerance by the lady. One of the show girls, a tall dark-haired woman of unusual beauty of the Oriental type, looked familiar to Boonton, and in the next moment he recognized her as Myra Russak. A glance from Stratford told him that he too had identified her. A few moments later the girl recognized Stratford across the foot-lights, and flashed her teeth at him. Almost the same instant she saw Boonton, and her face fell. The expression was fleeting, however, for the management exacts from show girls that they should smile all the time whether they have indigestion or sore feet or what not.

The girl went through her portion of the work with remarkable accuracy. She had the latent

artistic sense her race possesses to no small degree, and indeed at one time when required to utter a few lines did it with no little display of self-possession. During the entr'act Hersey went out to smoke, but Bessam, fond as he was of smoking, could not tear himself away from the neck beside him. Stratford watched the pair with some amusement. He had been quite silent since entering the theater. The thought of Mildred Fuller had depressed him more than he had believed possible, a feeling which the sight of Myra Russak and the stereotyped actions of the attorney's wife did not tend to lessen.

Katherine's heavy solidity stood out in glaring contrast, and he addressed her with some tenderness in his voice. "Did you notice that dark-haired girl in the chorus?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered. Her placid, self-satisfied face showed little animation. "Surely you are not going in for that sort of thing?" she added simply.

The reply annoyed Stratford. Like all men, he rebelled at the thought that a woman had seen something he believed had escaped her notice, and still more at the idea that she had come to a conclusion based on a faulty assumption rather than upon the real facts. The little air of superiority her set expression of countenance conveyed annoyed him also, and he felt that this was simply a manifestation of what women call intuition. Most men call it lack of ability to arrive at a logical conclusion, and a few keen observers of experience do not call it by name,

but simply accept it like a man ultimately develops an unconscious tolerance for a bad habit in a friend whose companionship is essential to his comfort and happiness.

Stratford had called Katherine's attention to the girl with the view of telling her some of the Russak story and the lesson it had taught him. Then, too, telling the story involved taking her into his confidence, which men only do with women in moments of tenderness, and which brings men and women closer together than perhaps anything else except a shared misfortune. Katherine's unfortunately inaccurate conclusion having its birth in Stratford's mind, in a certain feminine complacency of judgment, arrested the impulse before it rose to his lips, and he immediately entered into a discussion of the various characters in the play.

Katherine realized she had made a mistake, but took recourse in silence, believing that, like most men, he would ultimately return to his original topic; a method which is universally successful, for men, after all, find understanding and sympathy for their own emotions in women quite essential to their lives. No doubt this would have obtained in this instance had not a momentary vision of Mildred Fuller's alert, attentive face flashed into Stratford's mind. So Katherine was doomed to disappointment, and Stratford, with masculine persistence, the outcome of what he regarded as an unjustified criticism, limited his conversation to other topics, strengthen-

ing in this way the belief in Katherine's mind that there was something worth concealing with respect to the show girl.

When the final scene ended with the prima donna taking an inordinately high note and the man with the legs undergoing various epileptiform contractions of his body which had nothing to do with anything else on the stage, and the entire company walking back and forth under varyingly colored limelight effects, Stratford's feeling of depression and annoyance had markedly increased.

Hersey put his guests in the wagonette like a man who has discharged a necessary if not a particularly attractive duty. The attorney and his wife with the neck were set down first, and a few minutes later Bessam's pile of granite was reached. Bessam left his daughter at the door and re-entered the wagonette.

"Hersey," he said as he seated himself with a grunt of satisfaction, "you have arrived at a time of life when you want to go home. Go ahead. I'm going to blow these kids to supper. We'll drive you home first, however, so you won't mope the entire tomorrow."

"Still love the glamour of the Great White Way, do you?" Hersey answered laughingly. "You're old enough to have better sense, if you were honest. However, go ahead. I prefer the quiet of my library and one of Onshi's highballs."

CHAPTER VII

AFTER dropping Hersey at his home Bessam ordered the coachman to drive to the Knickerbocker.

"I'll give these skates of yours a little night air," he called to Hersey as the wagonette made the turn. "You should drive a motor and not retain your old-fashioned notions. As it is, you can expect your Noah's ark back by daylight—if you have luck."

"Well, don't die of a broken heart when you tip John," Hersey laughed back. "A taxi would be cheaper now that I mentioned it." A reply which made the usually immovable countenance of the coachman distort itself into what might, with a little stretch of the imagination, be called a grin.

"It's too bad he won't go with us," Bessam said, turning to Stratford. "If anything should happen to him, I'd be in a hell of a fix." The old steel magnate's heavy face took on a boyish expression, which made Boonton feel that after all men are only boys grown tall—and in this instance fat.

Stratford made no answer and continued to stare out of the window of the rig still dominated by an unaccountable feeling of depression. A few minutes later the wagonette drew up before the brilliantly illuminated hotel.

Quite a formidable row of motors stood in line

waiting for their human freight. Most of the motors were of the limousine type and had little electric bulbs fixed in the roof of the body, which illuminated the heavily upholstered interiors. Many of them had bouquets of flowers stuck into holders fastened at the front windows, and not a few were lined in striking colors, destined to carry out an accord with some woman's attire. The Hersey rig, with its plain paneling and dark green upholstery, rangy big-shouldered bay horses and severely liveried men on the box, made a singular contrast to the glittering brass and glaring colors of the modern vehicles.

"Wait, John," Bessam called as he stepped down. "Don't get loaded until after you collar that tip," he added, with his usual hearty laugh.

The men descended into the cellar of the building, to what went by the name of the "grill." The place was furnished with light-colored chairs and tables. The ceiling was low and had fantastic figures of deer and pheasants, grotesquely attired heralds, queer-looking birds, and an occasional knight in armor painted on it. A number of people crowded around the entrance of the room. The women were all well gowned and the men attired in evening clothes. A heavy rope covered with red velvet stretched across the door leading from a white-tiled hallway to the grill. Most of the tables were unoccupied, but the crowding at the door steadily increased without a commensurate filling up of the room. At intervals a group of patrons elbowed their way to the rope.

The attendant called out a name, not infrequently ending in "heimer" or "meyer." The rope was let down by the attendant, who wore a livery, and the people were turned over to a well-groomed head waiter, who in turn issued a second order in restaurant French to a second slick-looking waiter, who then escorted the guests to a table.

Bessam's portly figure made progress with some difficulty. When he reached the rope the head waiter's face lighted up. "This way, Monsieur Bessam," he called. Bessam slipped a neatly folded banknote into his hand as he reached his table, which the pilot accepted without comment.

"That's the first thing you have to learn to do, Jim, when you get to Albany," Bessam said as the men unfolded their napkins, which had been artistically arranged on the service plates.

One man took the order which Bessam gave without consulting his guests, another served the cocktails from an ambulatory bar. The migratory dispenser of concentrated beverages wore a white duck jacket and a chef's cap and pushed his bar around the room from table to table. A boy in a black Eton jacket and a red sash pushed about a large glass humidior which was mounted on rubber tired wheels. The sash was the outcome of an imaginative mind on the part of the hotel-keeper's wife, who liked splashes of color and artistic effects.

The supper was served rapidly and silently. The attendants seemed to anticipate the wants of the

guests. Bessam remained silent. Indeed, the constant influx of well-gowned women was entertainment enough even for a cosmopolitan. Most of the women wore low gowns. Almost all of them were literally encrusted with diamonds. Only a few had refrained from cosmetic art as regards eyebrows, lips, and cheek. The majority of them were young, or at least appeared so in the craftily illuminated room.

More than half the guests were Jews. All of these were well-dressed. Most of them escorted manifestly blonde or strikingly dark-haired gentile women, whose faces were familiar to theater-goers, and still more so to men about town.

Boonton sat very still. He had his deformed hand tucked under the edge of the ample table cover. Stratford had witnessed the scene too often to be particularly interested. Bessam engulfed enormous oysters without flinching.

A short flight of stairs encroached upon the room. A small platform led from the top of the steps to the door with the velvet covered rope. Each group of patrons waited on the platform for the head waiter to assign them to a table. This gave those already seated ample opportunity to scrutinize all comers. The crowd at the door dwindled down. The attendant removed the rope. Presently Myra Russak appeared on the platform. She was accompanied by a tall, heavily built man with a red face and thick gray hair. He was in quite proper even-

ing attire, though his shoes were a little heavy and the vest not quite modern. The color of his face suggested Western sun and wind rather than Burgundy.

Myra Russak had not delayed in effecting a complete transformation. She wore, slightly tilted toward the right shoulder, and ornamented with a sweeping aigrette, an enormous hat held in place by a large glittering pin. Her gown was of most approved pattern, lying close to the hips and somewhat narrower at the knees, making it difficult for her to walk. Her neck was bare and its upper portion encircled by a single row of goodly-sized pearls. She had removed her gloves, revealing firm white arms.

"That's that new Jew girl in the Happyman company," a voice said behind Boonton. "They say the manager is her friend. Any girl can get a job who will let the manager be her friend. I wonder where she got on to that cowboy." The speaker was a blonde, rather pretty girl with manifestly darkened eyebrows and abnormally red lips, which made a singular contrast to a childish chin and slender neck.

"She's handsome enough to land anybody," the blonde girl's escort answered. "Gee, but she's a stunner!"

"Oh, she's a Sheeney!" the girl exclaimed, with a contemptuous pout. "Why don't you go after her yourself, if you want her?"

"Now, dear, don't be foolish," the man put in

hastily. He was a well-made chap with carefully brushed dark hair and pale, somewhat drawn cheeks.

The attendant led Myra and her Westerner to a table near Bessam's. Boonton looked sadly at Stratford. Stratford shrugged his shoulders. Bessam had finished his oysters and now attacked a crab *Ravigotte* with great avidity.

"Go on and take in the show," he said with his mouth full of crab meat. The mayonnaise had trickled into his beard, giving him a grotesque appearance as he spoke.

A dark-haired woman in a very low gown and an inordinate number of diamonds smiled at him, and he lifted his glass to her, a salutation the woman returned by sipping her wine, though she did not smile again for fear of exciting the anger of her escort. He was quite as fat as Bessam, but had evidently imbibed too freely of the sparkling fluid, with the result that he had devoted considerable time and energy in submitting to the woman a résumé of her unattractive characteristics.

Bessam finished his crab with astonishing rapidity, and was served a bloody "mallard." Boonton and Stratford ate enough of each dish not to make Bessam's enormous appetite too glaringly manifest in contrast, though both men were considerably relieved when Bessam pushed his plate toward the center of the table and wiped his beard with his napkin. Coffee was served almost immediately, and

Bessam turned his chair sideways so as to be able to cross his legs.

"Well, Jim," he began, between forcible jabs of a toothpick at his large strong white teeth, "tell me, how goes the political game?"

He listened patiently while Stratford reviewed the situation. He was a clear-headed, keen man of affairs, and had had much experience in matters of this sort.

"It is a question in my mind," he said thoughtfully, when Stratford finished speaking, "if it would not have been better for you to tackle the great corporation and trust question. Of course you can't beat them in the end, but for a time the people believe you can and they'll follow after you like so much cattle. I've known—and so have you—that sort of thing to lead to the Presidential chair in the end. Some of us know this to our sorrow, though in the end the fellow's bluff only broke a few who had less foresight than is necessary in any great financial game. Most of us got on the band wagon and sold short; later we bought in at the bottom and got away with the biggest profit yet made in Wall Street.

"Does the absolute immorality of that sort of thing never occur to you?" Boonton asked.

Bessam laughed.

"Mr. Boonton," he answered, shaking at his guest his toothpick, which had a fragment of mallard stuck to it, "you are a teacher of the way the Great Redeemer went. That has nothing to do with the


financial proposition of the day. I can see, however, where even your game can be turned to practical use. I hope Jim has brains enough for that. But stick to your plan. If you fail, come to me and I'll show you a game worth while."

Bessam yawned heavily, and Stratford, who had not yet overcome the feeling of depression which had its origin in Katherine's stupidity, took advantage of the elder man's fatigue and suggested that they go home.

Bessam made somewhat sleepy by his distended paunch readily consented, and the men rose to go. As they passed Myra Russak the girl was leaning over the table with the edge of her hat close to her shoulder, quite concealing her face. Her Westerner was talking very earnestly to her, his face flushed a deep red, and as the men passed by he moistened his lips with some wine which bubbled in a long-stemmed, slender glass.

The wagonette soon deposited Bessam at his door. He had become quite drowsy by this time, though he did not forget to hand John his tip before he mounted slowly to his granite pile. The younger men drove away in silence to Boonton's home far on the East Side. Boonton kept very regular hours and was glad at last to reach his little house on Delancey Street where he made his headquarters. Stratford dismounted with him.

"I am going to walk home," he called to the coachman, who raised his whip and drove off, the horses




trotting quickly away between the rows of refuse barrels standing in front of the dark silent tenements.

"Good-night!" Boonton said in his simple way. "God be with you." He reached out his left hand, which Stratford grasped in his own left hand, a habit he had developed as the outcome of an unconscious adaptation to his friend's affliction.

It was a glorious starlit night. Already a touch of spring was in the air. The smoke and perfume of the grill had had a disagreeable effect upon Stratford, and he was glad to breathe the air, though indeed this was not a little impregnated with unpleasant emanations from the refuse barrels. A gang of street cleaners was laboring industriously with the problem of cleansing the street. A four-horse truck laden with milk to be deposited at the several milk distributing stations creaked along. The horses were enormous powerful Normans owned by the milk company which sold its wares to a charitably inclined Jew, who was also the head of a large department store at which not a few of the residents of the district bought their household necessities.

The Jew had been recently engaged in a heated controversy with the milk company because it delivered the milk at night. He wanted the four-horse truck and its sturdy Normans to travel the streets in the daytime. His name when placarded on the truck would make evident to all what a benefactor he was. The milk company was willing to do this provided the philanthropist would agree to pay it the



usual rate for a special advertisement. The milk company was in a position to make this demand, as it controlled almost all the milk which came to the great city. The philanthropist hesitated. After all, perhaps the extra charge demanded by the milk company would bring better results if employed in another direction. Only a few weeks before the milk company had rebelled because the beneficiaries stole the milk bottles. Later his name was blown in the bottles. If the bottles were not returned, they would be the means of keeping the philanthropist's name before the public.

Stratford had been informed of the little war by Boonton, who of course was in touch with all the minor tragedies of his people. He watched the great horses strain at their traces and the heavy wheels grind into the asphalt as the truck rolled on. The driver, an enormous Swede who stood on the foot-board of his truck, whistled an air from the very comic opera Stratford had seen that night. He touched the off leader with the whip just as he passed under an electric arc light. The horse plunged forward and the team broke into a trot. The strength, the force of it all, this concentrated effort to conserve the energies of the people, seemed a wonderful phenomenon, indeed quite in accord with his own idealistic ideas. Yet suddenly the recollection of the philanthropist's peculiar methods, the startling viewpoint Bessam had expressed on top of the crab meat and the bloody mallard came into his mind.

A feeling of utter helplessness stole over him. Katherine's simple sweetness seemed feeble and abhorrent. Her very complacency, the matter of fact way in which she wore her jewels, her expensive gowns, the entire artificiality of the whole situation, became repellant. He had walked quite unconsciously toward the center of the city. He stopped now to light a cigarette. A deep-toned whistle from some coastwise steamer obtruded on the silence. He glanced up at the smoke coming from the tall chimney of the powerhouse which was still pattering cinders against Russak's windows. A faint haze stole into the air. He turned about and walked toward the river. Like all men who are suddenly overwhelmed by the realization of the magnitude of an undertaking, he felt momentarily deserted and alone. Mildred Fuller's handsome face, her strong, lithe, young figure, her ready conformation to his moods came into his mind. He continued to walk toward the river. Soon he reached the little house with its iron guarded garden. It was near two o'clock and the windows were dark. For a moment he hesitated, then rang the bell. In a moment Mildred opened the door herself.

"I knew you would come to-night," she said simply. She led the way into her living-room. "How swell we look," she added. "I have never seen you in evening clothes before."

She was a trifle pale, and her dark eyes looked strangely intent in the half light from the lamp she

had lighted as Stratford took off his coat. She wore a kimona, though her feet were encased in street shoes. She noted Stratford's scrutiny.

"You see," she said, "I had not made ready for bed. I was afraid I would not hear you ring. Don't smile your incredulous smile," she laughed. "I just *knew* you would come to me."

"I am glad I came," Stratford answered. His voice was tired.

She had never seen him this way. The maternal instinct asserted itself.

"You are tired, dear," she said gently. "I am so glad—glad you have come to me when I can do something to rest you." She ran her white soft hand through his hair. The next instant she ignited a cigarette and held it to his lips. "Let me baby you, oh, just a little."

Soon he told her of his evening. He told her the Russak story, of the dinner, the supper and, last, the impression he got from the four-horse truck. The girl listened attentively. When he finished she kneeled beside his chair and rested her cool smooth cheek against his.

"But you are not like that, dear," she began in her wonderfully attuned voice. "You are stronger than that. You will show them the way. You can do it, dear, my great strong handsome boy. Let me know you because of what I know you can do. When you are a great man, greater than all the rest,"—she waved her hand in a wide circle as though indicating

a multitude,—“when all look up to you, I will be proud that I just lighted a cigarette for you; that at moments like this you found time for me. It will be the one thing in my life, the one thing that will dim all else into forgetfulness.”

She kissed his tired eyes. Her warm breath seemed to clear his mind as though a new vitality went with it into his heart. A strange feeling of content, of restfulness, possessed him. He let her lead him by the hand and up into her own chamber. She helped him off with his dress coat, arranged the pillows on the divan, and made him lie down. The feeling of fatigue weighed again heavily upon him and he fell asleep.

She sat very still beside him for a long time watching his regular breathing. She had moved a large soft chair beside the divan, and in this she sat with her chin resting on her hand and the elbow supported by its arm. The hours slipped by. She had a feeling as though she were protecting him thus against all the wiles and snares of the world she knew so much better, after all, than even men like Hersey and Bessam. Stratford's head sank deep into the soft cushion. A rim of moisture appeared on his forehead near the hair. She rose and wiped it off. He turned his head, revealing a few gray hairs at the temple. She bent over very carefully and slowly until her lips touched his cheek.

A faint streak of light crept in between the window curtains. She stepped to the window and drew

the curtain aside. Gray dawn already shimmered in the East. The river ran smoothly and swiftly on to the sea, reflecting the first dim daylight on its surface. She stood for some time watching the increasing daylight invade a new zone. The thought of what it brought with it came into her mind.

"It brings most to those who go the right way," she muttered, with a wan little smile playing for a moment with her motile lips.

Stratford moved uneasily in his sleep. The next moment he awakened.

"Come here, dear," she said, beckoning him with her white slender hand. "See, a new day. It brings perhaps a new strength for all of us; to make you, too, go on indomitably to your end."

He stood beside her watching the sun rise, a luminous circle which made a radiant patch upon the water, with its swirling eddies. Soon she helped him on with his coat and went to the door with him.

"You will come soon again?" she asked. He nodded his head. She turned up the collar of his overcoat and let her wrist rest for an instant on his cheek. He kissed the palm of her hand and went on into the rapidly increasing sunshine.

The next day Cosgrove sent for Stratford. He sat him down in his little office with some ceremony.

"Only men who have been eminently successful can afford to fly in the face of public opinion," Cosgrove began, with some gravity in his voice. "I am not in any game which makes a difference. I am, as

you know, one of those who live by the weaknesses of human nature. Like all men of my kind, now that the years have passed over my head, I like the thought of being even indirectly concerned in building better for another than I did for myself. A so-called dive keeper is not necessarily devoid of normal human emotions. Leave this Fuller woman alone. She will do you only harm.

"A man's private life has nothing to do with his public efforts," Stratford answered. He resented the paternal attitude Cosgrove seemed to take toward him.

Cosgrove laughed.

"I see that you do not like advice from a ginmill keeper," he said. "I take the liberty of saying, however, that your answer is as old as the problem you are facing." He tapped the edge of his desk with his broad, thick powerful fingers. "Bigger and stronger men than you have met and fallen for their Cleopatras. You see I have enough of my early training left to still use similes, even if they are a bit shopworn."

"I fancy," Stratford interposed, "that I will be able to tear myself away when the time comes, Cosgrove."

"Perhaps you can. At any rate I hope so," Cosgrove went on. "But a man cannot lead two lives. I have never seen a man who got away with it—to return to the vernacular. Jim, there is only one way to go, and that is the right, square way. I do not

have alone in mind your political opponents when I say this. Though they would be glad to get the chance to make a hubbub about the aristocrat from Murray Hill who preaches reform and makes frequent visits to a little house near the river which is the residence of a certain attractive woman whose history is associated with the late ward politician McNulty. That would be bad enough. But I have too in mind your own mental state—the degrading influence this sort of thing must have on yourself. How much it will make your mind see less clearly what is right and wrong. I have known this woman for ten years. She has exceptional ability and a remarkably clear head. I know of course that the surest way to make a man stand by a woman is to roast her. It always makes the man think he's doing the gentlemanly thing to protect her. I tell you what I think, however, and take the chance. But I have gone far enough in the matter. You must act as best you think yourself. I wish to speak to you of another thing. You must effect residence in an assembly district where we can elect you. Your own district is strongly Republican. We could not carry you in from there. This is an easy matter. Boonton's headquarters are in my district. Take up your home with him. It must be done at once, so as not to make the thing too glaring. I will see that it is made to appear that you came down here to work with Boonton, and that, seeing your trend, we forced you to accept a nomination to represent

the people in whom you are vitally interested. There, Jim, that's a long speech for me."

Stratford readily agreed to change his residence, and left in a few minutes to go at once to Boonton's house. As he walked along Cosgrove's admonition stuck in his thoughts. He knew in his heart that Cosgrove was right in principle, but regarded the notion that he would let Mildred Fuller or any other woman get beyond his control as ridiculous. It was true, he had felt each time that he had been to see her, that the situation presented a certain agreeable environment which made him wish to go again. Like most men of cosmopolitan training, he had had several temporary affairs with women whom he dismissed from his mind together with a check and perhaps a pair of gold garter buckles or some bauble of that sort. None of these had done other than amuse him, and as he was known as a dilettante not particularly interested in anything worth while he had never been subjected to any criticism as the result of this other than perhaps a cold stare from one of the women of his own social sphere who had seen him lunching with some blonde creature of the foot-light world in a town restaurant in mid-summer when everybody is out of the city, and yet finds time to run in during the week to do some necessary shopping for a hop for which "she hasn't a thing to wear." Also be it said, that usually the shopper collected enough material on these occasions to keep the tongues of several wives wagging at the summer

hotel and incidently make it exceedingly uncomfortable for the respective husbands during their week-end visits to the family. Too, the shopper managed to wear a very becoming gown on these visits, and a more or less attractively arranged veil which she dropped over one side of her face while she looked archly at the man whom she had at first greeted with the distainful stare just to make the "bleached hussy" uncomfortable and show her that she possessed no attractions greater than her own.

Boonton lived in a three-story brick house which stood in a small row of similar ones. The property belonged to an estate which was effectually tied up by a short-sighted property owner who had died and left his will in such a manner as to make certain changes in the holdings of the heirs impossible. The result was that most of the houses were occupied as tenements with none of the arrangements which made a sufficient number of occupants possible to make the property pay. Three of the buildings had been saved from the ruin, however, one on either side of Boonton's, which were occupied by physicians who practiced their profession in the district. Boonton had the house repaired and comfortably furnished. Stratford found him in his study, a large, well-lighted chamber over the reception room. He was genuinely pleased when told of Stratford's intention, and immediately issued the necessary orders to a dapper little Japanese boy who had lived with him for years.

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Hersey accepted the situation with his usual display of indifference when informed of Stratford's intent.

"Come in and dine with me when you get really hungry," he said in the end. "That preacher fellow doesn't look as though he ate too much. It's queer how some of these men get the notion that punishing their stomachs has a bearing on their ultimate salvation." A conclusion which was faulty enough in this instance, for Boonton had a very comfortable and even luxurious table; and while he did not eat inordinately himself, he never obtruded his frugalism upon his friends, as indeed he never exacted conformation to his mode of life from anyone.

Boonton led of course a somewhat lonesome life and greeted the opportunity to share his home with Stratford with great pleasure. The two men worked on with great diligence. Stratford became actually interested in the problems which Boonton attacked, and soon found himself performing acts of real practical charity which he had never believed himself capable of. He had had no idea of shunning Mildred Fuller, and indeed found it an agreeable indulgence to run in and tell her of his work. She was ever glad to see him, every ready with her sympathy and advice, the latter not infrequently being of genuine value.

She seemed to lead an exceedingly simple life and as time went on Stratford became interested in her own method of living. The deceased politician had

left the girl in very comfortable circumstances, and Stratford was astonished to learn that she spent most of her time at an art school on Washington Square or in a musical studio in Carnegie Hall, though this explained her acquaintance with art and the character of entertainment she had offered when Boonton had called on her with Stratford. McNulty had, only a few weeks before his death, invested in a motor car, and in this Mildred Fuller often drove out through the suburbs, sitting very quietly and alone in the tonneau of the car with her face quite thickly veiled. On several occasions she had asked Stratford to accompany her, but the invitation had been constantly rejected, on the ground that his engagements made it impossible for him to accept. Mildred Fuller, though a little annoyed at his persistent refusal, felt that perhaps there was a reason for it, and reluctantly accepted the situation.

CHAPTER VIII

TWO weeks after the Hersey dinner Boonton and Stratford received cards for Katherine Bessam's tea. Katherine had seen Stratford only once since the evening of the dinner party. Bessam had asked Stratford to drop in on him to talk over some little legal wrangle he was involved in with respect to one of his investments. After the interview, which took place in Bessam's library, Stratford stopped for a few moments in the salon of the big house where Katherine was entertaining a small group of guests. He was in street clothes, and made a singular contrast to the black evening attire of the men and the light-colored gowns of the women.

Katherine gave him a few minutes, however, though she was visibly annoyed at what she regarded as an unnecessary accentuation of Stratford's pose as a worker among the people.

"Because you have delved into the slums, that is no reason why you should obtrude its garb wherever you go," she said peevishly. "I don't understand you at all," she added, with a touch of humility in her voice when she saw Stratford's ominous frown.

"No, I suppose not," Stratford answered, with some emphasis, and turned away, giving rise in

Katherine to a vague sense of apprehension, which of course she did not analyze with success.

With Stratford's invitation came a little note written on perfumed paper in Katherine's heavy scrawling characters, asking him to surely come, and also expressing regret at her inconsiderate remark at their last meeting.

On the day of the tea Boonton had a late appointment at the Jewish Hospital, where he was to meet a well-known surgeon to decide the fate of one of his people, and with characteristic self-sacrifice induced Stratford to go on alone after promising to meet him at the Bessam home.

Stratford climbed into his frock coat and other tea accessories for the first time in several weeks, "phoned" for a taximeter and started off feeling a "bit dressed up." He drove up Fifth Avenue and soon skirted the Park. The mighty elm trees beside the road showed quite a shimmer of green on their strangely contorted branches.

"Looks like Doré touched by the breath of spring," he muttered, with a half-amused expression on his face at the thought of associating Doré and his fantastic ideas of hell with anything so prosaic as the asphalted roadway of a great metropolitan city. The "meter" rolled smoothly on among the glittering cars and vehicles of the "higher classes." May had crowded April into the past, and the warm spring air felt agreeable enough, laden as it was by the odor of budding flowers.

A silent "six cylinder" stole by. Stratford became intent upon identifying the name of the maker of the car, which was outlined in red on the dust cup over the hub.

"Hello, Jim!" came a familiar voice from the tonneau of the passing car. Stratford looked up, Mildred Fuller flashed her white teeth from the folds of the motor veil surrounding her handsome face. Stratford lifted his hat. Mildred leaned forward and spoke to her driver. The six slowed down and came close to Stratford's taximeter.

"Come, drop that wheezing old thing," she called with a twinkle in her great bright eyes. "I'll take you along. You must be going to do the 'heavy society act' the way you are befrocked, and with that stove-pipe hat. They wear those at teas, do they not?"

"Drive to the curb," Stratford ordered his man.

The big car slid to the sidewalk ahead of the meter, where its imperceptible rhythm made a striking contrast to the grind and sputter of Stratford's hack.

Stratford paid the man, who fumbled for some time in his pockets before he could find change for the banknote handed him, but Stratford waited, however, with the patience a man develops who has frequently been unnecessarily mulcted by these road pirates.

"I am only going a short distance farther on," he explained as he mounted beside the girl.

"Well, tell my man to stop when you get there," the girl answered. The car slowly gained headway. The driver kicked the high gear in with the calf of his leg, a practice he had learned driving a demonstration car, so as to lead a prospective buyer to believe that the car he drove could be started on the high gear.

"These swell functions last until seven, do they not?" she asked. "It is only five now," she went on as Stratford nodded his head. "I'll give you a turn up the road and bring you back by six. That is, if she will not get disagreeable at your making her wait."

"There is no she," Stratford answered. "I am making a formal call."

"I'll drive you up to Woodmansten," she said, still smiling. "That's only a short run. If we get pinched for speeding Cosgrove will 'phone bail. Come on. Oh, please!" she added quickly as he opened his lips to utter the refusal she saw in his eyes.

"Very well," Stratford said, the words in no sense conveying the idea he had in his mind.

"Up to Woodmansten," she ordered the man, with a bare note of exultation in her voice. The motor rolled smoothly on. They passed the red and white striped awning which covered the entrance to the Bessam home.

"That's where I'm going," Stratford said, indicating the formidable edifice with his gray gloved hand.

"I know the house," she answered. "Belongs to old Bessam. I have heard Cosgrove speak of him at times. Got a daughter, hasn't he?"

"Yes."

"What is she like?"

"Oh, like a lot of other women. Tall, well made, and rather well gotten up."

"What is the color of her eyes?" the girl asked next.

"I don't know. Blue, I think. I don't think I noticed. She has light hair, so I guess they are blue. They ought to be."

Mildred watched his face narrowly as he answered. She gave a little satisfied nod when he finished speaking.

"I suppose she does not take champagne in a corner ginmill?" the girl asked after a pause.

"I think not," Stratford retorted laughingly. "I am not sufficiently familiar with her habits to state positively. As a rule women in her set do not. She takes a little at dinner, I fancy, but as for the other, I am inclined to think she doesn't."

They drove on in silence. The girl pictured the scene in the Bessam drawing-room behind the gray somber-looking walls. She had seen so-called society mimicked on the stage—usually as a part of some play in which a young society matron is tempted by the heavy villain, who is almost invariably a foreigner who smokes cigarettes throughout the play, only to be saved in the last act by the bachelor "trailer," who

steps in at the critical moment and tells her to "stick" or do some equally agglutinous thing, at which the audience applauds very vigorously and the men in middle life smile a bit incredulously. Mildred had a peculiar contempt for the lady with the slippery feet who has bachelors eat out of her hand. She felt that a woman has to stand by the man who puts up for her, or else cut him out altogether. The latter she felt was just as easy, and developed no annoying complications.

"What do you talk about at these affairs?" she asked suddenly.

"You say good day to the hostess, tell her that her gown is becoming, and that you regret so much that your engagements have made it impossible for you to call before. Then you are roped by one of the women guests, who leads you aside and you get her some tea or some punch, or both, and then if she is clever she makes you talk about yourself. You try to turn the conversation to something else, but get back to yourself in the end. That is the result of woman's appreciation of man's innate self-love."

"That should be interesting to the man," Mildred put in as Stratford paused. "When the woman talks of herself, what does she say?"

"Tells you that she expects you to do something great some day, and she will sit aside and admire you from a distance, for of course when you have achieved greatness she will be only a minor factor in your life. After a time, during which she looks

thoughtfully at her gloved hands, she adds: 'And you will let me share your success from a distance, will you not? The conviction that I was a small incidental thing at a time when you were still climbing your ladder will mean much to me, after all. I love the strength and the contest of it all.' Then she plays more or less adroitly with the fabric of her skirt, folding it up and smoothing it out again over her lap, with the knowledge in her mind that her eyelashes look well sweeping her cheek. Then you go out and drink highballs or the like at your club and have the mental reservation that the woman is a liar—and you will be right, for she tells the next man the same thing in precisely the same way."

"Tell me more," the girl plead as Stratford stopped.

"There is not much more to tell," Stratford resumed. "At times early in life you believe the woman. Then you try very hard and perhaps achieve something, and suddenly realize that you have not had time to tell the woman about it, and you are confronted with the conviction that the telling and the doing won't mix; and you either stop doing or are dropped by the woman. Most real men prefer the latter; a few stop trying, which, by the way, the woman does not really care about, for now she offers the man sympathy for his futile efforts, and he trails along for her more or less adroit solace."

"Are there no real pals in your set?" Miss Fuller asked. Her eyes had become intent and she listened

very attentively to Stratford's clear well modulated voice. "You have known women like that?" she asked, as he did not answer at once.

"The trouble is," Stratford began earnestly, "that most of the men and women of my set have had their money made for them by some battling ancestor. Their common interests revolve in a small circle. As you can see from what I say, the whole fabric of the social cloth is a question of social intercourse. This does not call for the exercise of unusual qualities. Once in a while a woman takes up art or literature. This interferes with social indulgences, and the husband feels that his possibilities are not sufficiently exploited. The woman then either gives it up or looks for sympathy or support in another field. If the man exhibits unusual characteristics the woman's social indulgences are interfered with; for even if a man have battling ancestors he must submit some individual accomplishments to become distinctive in his set. The man then finds an affinity and the affair ends in the divorce courts."

"Does the man find an affinity in his own set or does he go outside of it?" Mildred asked now.

"It depends upon the man. As a rule he finds no difficulty in finding a temporary affinity in his own set, and when he does he is perpetually dodging complications which might compromise the woman and incidentally himself. Again, he may resent the thought of living like an anarchist, for of course he is a social anarchist, and dislikes the deceit, the subterfuge, and

the ignominy of it all. Men like that pick up a woman of another sphere, a well-known actress, a woman of the middle classes,—where, after all, both brains and body are most largely of superior types,—or a chronic female offender, and regards the matter as semi-commercial. If he does the latter the women of his own set raise their eyebrows and are likely to say, ‘If he had an affair with one of his own social level I could understand it; but to take up with that creature. Well, I’d rather not talk about it.’ The women have the reservation in their mind, however, that perhaps the creature has some art or some accomplishment they lack, and wonder what it is. Not without some envy. The men of his own set shrug their shoulders, but have the conviction in their minds that at least the fellow had the decency to restrict his deviations to the proper class. If the man happens to be good to look at, the men also heave a sigh of relief at the thought that their own women have escaped one danger.”

Mildred Fuller’s face clouded when Stratford finished.

“The proper class,” she thought. “That means me.”

She smiled at Stratford the next instant, however, and thanked him for his explanation.

“I should not care how I was classed,” she added, “if I could have the man I wanted. I fancy that this is the fallacy of the situation in most cases of that sort.”

Stratford did not answer. The motor rolled smoothly on along the broad macadam road leading toward the shore of Long Island Sound. The clock on the dash showed twenty minutes after five o'clock.

"We are almost there," Miss Fuller said. "You have plenty of time to talk to some woman about yourself. Let us go a bit farther on. I have no other chance to have someone share my country drives with me."

Stratford nodded his head. The car slid over the bridge built over an arm of the Sound.

"That is your country club," she said, pointing toward a white low building standing out against the Eastern sky, its red roof making a blotch of color in the green foliage and against the blue water.

"Yes," he answered. He was surprised that she knew. Like all men he did not take into account a woman's ways and means of satisfying her curiosity.

"Why not stop there?" she asked.

"I think it would be too late," he answered, somewhat disconcerted.

"You mean I have no right there?" she asked with a little catch in her voice.

"No, I won't say that exactly." He had a contempt for subterfuge.

"Then why not? Tell me. I want to know."


"A man holds his club in a peculiar respect," he answered, with a stiffening lip. "Do not force me to explain."

"I admire your straightforward honesty more

than anything else in you," she said, with feminine elasticity. "It hurts a bit now. But I guess you know what's best."

She ordered the man to turn back. During the return drive he talked of other things. She led him to speak of his political ambitions. The convention was to sit in October. She seemed quite familiar with the methods of the professional politician, a knowledge gleaned from her association with McNulty and Cosgrove.

The wind quite died down as the sun dipped toward the western rim of sky and the air became heavy and close as it does at times in early spring. She slipped out of her motor coat with a deft movement of her strong lithe body, and hung the garment over the brass rail fastened at the back of the front seats of the car. She made a pretty picture now, leaning against the dark leather of the tonneau, with her luminous eyes, fair smooth skin, and full red lips. Her face was quite somber-looking, and one corner of her mouth dropped a little, giving her an expression one sees in women who have lost something—a long time ago—something they have let dim into the past, yet too has left a twist of feature. Artists try very hard to put the thing on canvas, and actresses—who perhaps should be classed as artists—spend much time in attempting to mimic it, and most often fail until they arrive at a time of life when their other alluring characteristics have been driven away by relentless time.



"You will surely get the nomination," she said, suddenly brightening up. "That means certain election."

"I am not so sure of that," Stratford answered slowly. "That man Hunter is attracting much attention. Cosgrove calls him a fake reformer. Yet he is certainly stirring up a lot of mud, and the public likes that. If he is nominated for district attorney he will be elected, and he may carry his party in with him."

"These reformers never last," she said with a contemptuous little pout.

"Yes; that's true, but they cause an upheaval at times, and it may be my misfortune to run for office in a so-called reform year. I don't think Cosgrove feels so sure of his proposition as he tries to make me believe. However, we will see."

The car had reached the asphalt of Fifth Avenue.

"Drop me a block this side of Bessam's house," Stratford said, as the car neared his destination.

The girl hung her head, but gave the order. Stratford saw that she was hurt.

"Never mind," he said gently. "Drive right up to the house."

She did not give the order.

"Drive to that house with the red and white striped awning," Stratford ordered the man.

There was a slight delay when the car drove up. A ponderous limousine with steel studded tires occupied the space in front of the awning. Two women

in rather elaborate attire dismounted from the car ahead. The younger one, a tall woman with thick dark hair, white skin, and a flat chest turned to the driver. "Come back a seven, Burns," she said in a high-pitched, unpleasant voice.

Mildred Fuller's six-cylinder mechanism drew up.

"Thank you for your courtesy and the breath of spring air," Stratford said to his companion as the car went ahead.

"Where to?" asked Miss Fuller's man, fingering the gear lever.

Stratford looked inquiringly at Mildred Fuller. "Drive through the Park," she answered quickly.

The woman with the flat chest waited at the foot of the steps leading to the house.

"How do you do, Mr. Stratford," she said, holding out a neatly gloved hand. "Who's your friend with the shirtwaist?" she asked nodding her head at the receding motor.

Stratford's eyes followed her glance. He saw for the first time that Miss Fuller's waist was quite transparent at its upper portion, and that the skin showed through the lace.

"That," Stratford answered, "is a young woman who arouses the envy of ladies who are compelled to wear opaque gowns, Miss Burnett. Shall we go in?"

They reached the throne of the hostess together. Katherine had the obligatory arch of ferns at her back. She was gowned in white, an effort at simplicity somewhat marred by a considerable quantity

of enormous turquoise ornaments fastened about the neck and waist. The room was comfortably filled. Katherine was talking to a tall, distinguished-looking man in the early fifties, who spoke English with a foreign accent, and wore a red ribbon in the button hole of his frock coat. Beside him stood a middle-sized, strongly built man with dark brown hair, a well-cut, slightly protruding chin, deep-set gray eyes, and heavy reddish eyebrows.

"You must meet Mr. Hunter, Baron," Stratford heard Katherine say as he approached a trifle behind the woman with the flat chest. "Mr. Hunter, Baron Henri de Neuville." She pronounced the "de" as though it had something to do with a portion of the twenty-four hours. The men shook hands. "Mr. Hunter is becoming famous as a tiger hunter," she went on. "You know we have a political organization here they call the tiger—but Mr. Hunter no doubt will make it all clear to you; to me it is a little confusing." The men passed on. "Oh, Miss Burnett and Jim," she cried as the next comers approached. She was genuinely glad to see Stratford, and showed it. "Did you come together?"

"No, indeed," Miss Burnett answered. "Mr. Stratford came in far more attractive company than myself, though he did not bring it past the door. However, she is very pretty and wears her clothes in accordance with Mr. Stratford's tastes, and that helps a lot." She gave a malicious glance at Strat-

ford, who by this time was bowing over Katherine's hand.

Katherine's complacent face looked puzzled for a moment.

"Well, as long as he is here we will not stand on the manner of his coming," she answered, with the automatic conformation to an immediate situation women develop who have done teas for several consecutive years. "How are you, Jim?" she asked, turning to Stratford. "You look a bit tired. Been speeching too much?"

"No, I am not tired of working," Stratford answered. "There are other things which are more fatiguing. So that's Hunter, is it?"

"Yes. Strong face, don't you think so?"

"Yes. Very. I fancy he's a man who gets what he starts after," Stratford said, following Hunter's square figure with his eyes.

"Well, I'm quite through with shaking hands and trying to remember each one of my guests' peculiarities," Katherine said, with a tired sigh, as Miss Burnett turned to greet one of the visitors, a bald-headed man with an enormous paunch, who seemed quite alone.

"Perhaps you will have some punch," Katherine added, as she led the way into the dining-room, where they saw Boonton's tall figure and red head towering from the midst of a group of women. He was listening very politely to a well-gowned blonde

girl who wore an inordinately large hat crowned with three plumes, that made her look like a mushroom the stem of which was rather more slender than mushrooms generally have. The girl turned as Stratford approached. She had a broad black velvet ribbon about her neck, to which a large diamond sunburst was attached. She was noticeably pale, and had deep, dark circles about pale, blue tired-looking eyes.

As she turned her neck the edge of a scar became visible as the velvet ribbon slipped. She noticed Stratford's quick glance at her neck, and readjusted the ribbon concealing the scar, though she sighed faintly as she did it. In the next instant she smiled up into Boonton's face and prattled on in a high-pitched, thin voice.

"I fancy your friend Boonton likes to do kindly things," Katherine remarked as she ladled out some punch into a short fat glass with a handle attached to its side.

"I think his entire life shows that," Stratford answered. "It is just like him to select this afflicted child from all the rest of your guests and make her afternoon go a little happier for her. As a rule men follow more their tastes than their duties. Poor Carle, he has been a lesson to me since I have lived down there in his slums."

"Yet I can't help but feel, Jim," Katherine said, "that there are certain people fitted for that sort of thing. Despite what you say, I do not approve your

attitude. You were not intended for the work. Why not leave it to others?"

"There are enough who leave things for others to do," Stratford answered, with a slight frown. The utter selfishness of Katherine's viewpoint annoyed him. A vision of Mildred Fuller's ever-ready understanding of his efforts flashed into his mind. A fine-looking old lady with white hair approached the corner where Katherine and Stratford stood. She engaged Katherine in conversation, and Stratford turned to the window. The thought of Katherine's lack of understanding conjured up a memory from his own field of endeavor.

One day he had gone with Boonton to see a trio of children who had diphtheria. The mother, a fat bewigged Jewish woman had plead very hard with the Health Department doctor not to take her children to the hospital. The doctor was willing to consent, provided the children were isolated at the top of the house in which the family lived. Boonton had been informed of the case, and dropped in just as the controversy was at its height. There happened to be an empty three-room apartment on the top floor of the tenement, and Stratford and Boonton had carried the youngsters up to it.

The Health Department doctor, a well-groomed, clean-cut young man, smiled approvingly when he saw the interest Stratford took in the matter.

"I'll send a man around with serum," he said after

the children were safely transported. "He'll be her in an hour or so. That damned chump of a woman must understand that these kids have to be injected whether she likes it or not," he added as he turned to the door.

The woman did not understand, and looked blankly from one man to the other. The man immediately translated what he had said into Yiddish which the woman listened to with growing astonishment and terror in her face.

"How long before he comes, did you say?" Stratford asked the man.

"Oh, a couple of hours, perhaps," the man answered. "It costs these people nothing."

"If I send for the serum at once will you make the injection?" Stratford asked next.

The man looked at his watch. "There is no reason for that," the man said. "It is not part of my duty to do that sort of thing. The stuff costs like the devil if you buy it at the chemist's shop. However, if you wish I'll do it."

"I'll go for it," Boonton put in.

The man waited. He smoked a cigarette and chatted with the woman in her jargon. It was a strange sight. The man removed his coat and sat beside the woman on a stationary washtub. Presently he said something that made the woman laugh. Soon they were good friends. When Boonton returned with the serum the man made the injections. The youngsters howled in unison for a few minutes,

but subsided into quiet by the time the man had washed his hands at the tap in the kitchen. Then he slipped into his coat, shook hands with the woman, lighted a fresh cigarette, and passed out with a brief nod to the two men. The woman had great big tears in her eyes when the well-groomed man left. She did not know that the man taught all about contagious diseases at a medical school and drove a motor to his country club when he finished working. She thought the government paid him a big salary.

Stratford was a bit annoyed that the man did not thank him and had shaken hands with a poor Jew woman instead of showing him some special consideration, but of course Stratford was only a dilettante, and didn't know the code among working people; though he said nothing about it, feeling that perhaps there was a reason for all this and that he might yet understand.

Late that day he called at the house by the river. After a time Mildred asked him why he did not kiss her. He told her about the "Jew diphtheria kids." She went to him and kissed him full on the mouth. "There is no danger that I do not want to share with you," she said, with her lips quite close to his.

This made Stratford think of the well-groomed chap who had injected the youngsters, and wondered what he did with the rest of his life.

Boonton and the girl with the velvet ribbon around her neck approached. The girl limped

slightly, making Stratford think of the tuberculous children he saw limping around the Ghetto with iron braces on their limbs.

Katherine, who had answered the white-haired lady's questions satisfactorily if not truthfully, presented Stratford to the girl. Boonton held his deformed hand behind his back as he ladled out some punch for the girl, who watched him fill a glass standing on the edge of the table on which the punch bowl stood. He replaced the ladle and held out the glass to her with his left hand. She looked up into his thin, heavily lined face with moistening eyes.

Hunter stepped up. He had been effectually corralled by Miss Burnett, who towered quite above him. Katherine presented Hunter to Boonton and Stratford. The girl with the velvet ribbon moved back from the table. She looked as though the formidable array of men awed her.

That moment Bessam bustled in. His face was flushed and his frock coat had a streak of dried soup on its satin lapel.

"Had to lunch a lot of Western men," he said to Katherine. "Those fellows all eat as though they had starved for weeks in one of their deserts. Incidentally, I irrigated their stomachs like they want us to irrigate their country. Sorry to be late, dear," he added as he saw Katherine's look of annoyance.

The old gentleman had a beginning jag.

"Here," he yelled at the butler, "bring us a cold quart. This punch makes me tired."

Boonton engaged Hunter in conversation. Hunter said complimentary things about Boonton's work. He turned suddenly to Stratford, who was fencing with Miss Burnett's adroit allusions to the girl with the transparent shirtwaist. "I see you have entered for the gentleman's motor race," he said. "I put my name down last night."

The women immediately became interested. Hunter explained that the governors of the automobile club had decided to eliminate the element of commercialism from the great motor race on Long Island by allowing only owners of cars and members of their own club to drive. "Each entrant must own the car he drives for three months before the race and for six months after it," Hunter went on to explain. "If he sells before that time he loses the prize and is expelled from the club. Then, too, he must not get his living either directly or indirectly from the automobile business."

"That last rule will exclude a lot of men," Bessam said. "Suppose a man is a stock-holder in an automobile factory?"

"He can't drive," Hunter answered. "They are getting up a purely amateur race. In addition, no entrant mentions or lists the name of the manufacturer of the car he drives. His car is listed by number, driven by so and so. This takes out an exceedingly offensive element of the contest as it is now."

"I'm glad you have taken up something beside your slum affair," Katherine said to Stratford.

"I imagine I'll enjoy the training for the race very much," Stratford answered. "I understand that there is no restriction with respect to weight and horse power. Am I right, Hunter?"

"Yes. So I understand it. I'll enjoy it much too, though finishing with you looking at my gasoline tank will also contribute much to my pleasure," Hunter answered.

He smiled frankly at Stratford, who felt an instant's admiration for the direct way Hunter looked at him as he said it.

"You'll drive all you know how to make me do it," Stratford retorted, with a laugh.

Neither man looked as though subterfuge was habitual with him.

"Oh, I love it," Miss Burnett put in, with a little simper. "It's like the days of the feudal lords discussing a bout at armored combat. I'd like to be one of the ladies in the royal box."

"I would like to lay the fruit of my effort at a lady's feet," Hunter answered, looking straight at Katherine, who flushed slightly.

"The pair of you have a damned good chance to have your bones laid at your lady's feet," Bessam called out from the edge of the table where he was pouring out his third glass of wine. "I regard it as rot, perfect damned rot!" Then turning to the silent butler, he yelled: "This stuff isn't cold enough. Get a cold bottle." He threw the partially emptied bottle neck downward into the freezer, where it siz-

zled its contents into the cracked ice, causing an overflow which trickled on the Turkish rug.

Boonton looked at his watch.

"Time to go?" Stratford asked.

"Yes, perhaps we had better start," Boonton answered.

The men arose and made their excuses. Katherine was a trifle pale when she shook hands with Stratford.

"I am a little afraid," she said, with a note of genuine concern in her voice. "Do be careful, Jim."

Stratford laughed and slipped his hand into Boonton's right arm, the hand of which he had buried in his trousers pocket. Katherine watched the two tall figures disappear among a number of stately palms standing in great profusion in the marble foyer. For an instant she caught a faint, transient glimpse of what the contest of life meant. Boonton's tall spare figure and Stratford's square shoulders and well-made head seemed indicative of something that she did not quite understand, yet aroused a peculiar feeling of pride within her, making her glad of knowing them. Hunter's admiring look made her feel how much more this would have been to her had it flashed from Stratford's clear blue eyes. She went on, however, saying a number of polite things to her guests.

"That was Mildred Fuller Miss Burnett was teasing you about," Boonton said as the men walked down Fifth Avenue.

"Yes. She picked me up as I was driving to Bes-sam's."

"So she is still driving her car, is she?" Boonton asked.

"Yes. Why?"

"Oh, I don't know. It just occurred to me that it would not help your political aspirations much to be seen driving up Fifth Avenue in an open car with a lady not in your own set."

"Dear old Carle," Stratford laughed back, "don't be a baby. One would think I am going to invite her to dine with Hersey."

"Hersey probably would not object on his own account. That's the trouble. Men don't go about with women of Miss Fuller's attractions for exercise. But I do not want to obtrude my own notions on you, Jim."

"That fellow Hunter has a strong face," Stratford said, apropos of nothing.

"Yes," Boonton answered, falling in at once with Stratford's mood. "I have a feeling that we will see more of him. I have looked him up. He graduated at Harvard. Played halfback on the 'varsity team same year as you rowed for us. He's been a successful attorney — mostly corporation work. Took the assistant district attorneyship as a fad. Made a hit before that in a big murder case—the one Hersey's attorney told about that night at dinner. Been trying excise cases since. Cosgrove tells me that he is relentless and cannot be reached. In a *recent* after dinner speech he said he'd close every

gambling house in New York if he was elected to the district attorneyship. Cosgrove says that's a good game. However, if you run for the assembly in our district you'll win unless Cosgrove's followers have their votes thrown out on a technicality."

"Is he well backed?" Stratford asked.

"You mean financially. Oh, yes. Has plenty of money of his own. Can't be accused of an ulterior motive in that regard. The voting masses will be likely to support him for that reason alone."

The men had reached the Plaza. A line of motors were held up by the crosstown traffic.

"There she is now," Boonton said, pointing at Miss Fuller, who sat demurely in the tonneau of her car. She saw the men at that moment, and beckoned to them.


"I'll drive you home," she said, addressing her remark to Boonton.

Boonton hesitated, but in the next moment got into the car. The girl sat between the two men as the car rolled slowly down the crowded avenue. Soon she left them at the door of Boonton's house. The men entered the library.

"I suppose," Boonton said, "that politeness is sometimes cowardly."

There was a moment's silence. Stratford lighted a cigarette.

"Then, too, most women can make most men do things," Boonton added slowly. "Especially if they have dark hair and a mouth like that poor child has. Jim, I am afraid."



CHAPTER IX

HERSEY was too thorough a sportsman himself to object to Stratford's driving the motor race, though he expressed his doubts as to the wisdom of it, considering that Hunter was Stratford's political opponent.

Stratford realized this phase of the situation, but regarded it as unimportant.

"Well, go ahead then," Hersey said in the end. "But do it right. Get the best motor built. I paid big money for my stallions. That's why I win enough stakes to make it worth while. Some people call it luck. They are in error. I started along proper lines. Another thing, drive for your life. If you lose for a reason under your own control I'll cut you for the rest of your life."

"You mean 'my life,' don't you?" Stratford laughed back. "Normally I should be doing things with my life long after you stop. But I recognize the Hersey arrogance in the way you put it."

Hersey joined in Stratford's laugh.

A week was occupied in an effort to decide upon the type of car to be used. Bessam, who loved that sort of thing, took great interest in the proposition. He trudged up and down narrow stairways, into garages and machine shops puffing and snorting like

a wind-broken steeple chaser. On these expeditions Bessam's mechanician accompanied the men. The fellow was a Russian, Sergis Orloff by name. Bessam picked him up at Port Said two years before. The boy worked for an English company which furnished gasoline motors to tramp steamers going through the Suez that were not equipped with the regulation searchlights the canal operators required that all craft should carry when negotiating the canal. Ship owners found it cheaper to hire engines of that sort than to hook up special apparatus for the purpose. A dozen men sailed back and forth on the canal taking care of the little motors.

Sergis had been an apprentice at Odessa on the Black Sea in the government shipyards. One drunken night he beat the top of a wheat broker's skull in with a monkey wrench. He had been working on an overtime job hooking up a spur gear to drive the dynamos on a cruiser which was booked to start on a training trip in the morning. At the last moment the yard admiral had ordered the belting taken off the dynamo shaft and wanted a direct drive experimented with. He thought the slip of the belt made the light jump down and up at times. The blessed mess came aboard only that day, and the gears refused to mesh. Sergis stayed on the job until midnight. Then he went ashore and proceeded to engulf large quantities of vodka, more than even a south Russian Tartar with an alcoholic line of progenitors can carry with dignity.

The wheat broker, who was a Jew, sat at an adjoining table in the rum shop where Sergis absorbed the vodka. He said disagreeable things about the chief of police of Odessa who had issued a certain order with respect to the transportation of wheat in the city streets. The chief of police happened to be Sergis' cousin. Sergis being an orphan, the chief of police put the boy into the polytechnic, where he studied engineering in the morning and in the afternoon worked in the shipyard to learn the practical side of the business.

The wheat broker was cold sober. He did not realize that drunken men retain the sense of hearing after some other faculties are abolished. Sergis had been pounding on the table with his monkey wrench for the waiter to bring him some more vodka. The waiter had been admonished by the rum-shop keeper to serve the boy no more vodka than he could help. The rum-shop keeper was afraid of Sergis' cousin.

Sergis persisted in pounding the table, showering splinters to all the points of the compass. The wheat broker became annoyed. He said more things about the chief of police, and also added something about a government which sold vodka to boys. Presently Sergis rose somewhat unsteadily, staggered over to the broker and spattered his brain against the wall. The monkey wrench had a fifteen inch arm manipulating it. Then Sergis promptly went into alcoholic coma.

He never knew that his cousin galloped up to the

rum-shop within a few minutes after the broker stopped talking. He also never knew that the same cousin drove him in a droschke down to a dock where a tank steamer was casting off its bow hauser, and that in some mysterious way the dock master couldn't get the stern hauser free and that the captain of the tank steamer lowered away a gangplank and descended wrathfully to the dock where he was engaged in a sweetly expressive argument with the dockmaster until two longshoremen had slid the still unconscious boy up to the forecastle deck and hurried ashore. The two longshoremen went astern and helped get the rebellious hawser free and then the tank steamer slowly got under way. Nor did he know that his cousin had made an entry on the police record, that the wheat broker had been killed in a fight in a rum-shop by some person or persons as yet unknown, and that he had assigned two of his best men to investigate the affair. The wheat broker, being a Jew, was allowed to rest peacefully in his grave, and the government which had sublime confidence in its chief of police let the matter rest in that way, feeling that its servant would do all that was necessary to see that justice was done.

In the end the police record was completed by a brief memorandum stating that the young student had disappeared simultaneously with the death of the wheat broker, and that it was a fair inference that the boy had killed the broker in a drunken quarrel the nature of which probably would never be

known. This was done by the servant of the government so that the government could take the matter up again from that viewpoint if the occasion arose.

The next morning when Sergis found himself on the forecandle deck his head did not feel very good. The captain of the tank steamer, a bearded, thick-necked giant came along. He swore at Sergis, who looked dumbly out on the water. The tank steamer did not smell nice. After a while the captain exhausted his vocabulary. He was short handed, expecting, however, to "crew up" at Port Said. He had been in command of a passenger steamer, but was set down for ending an argument with his first officer about a noon observation by driving the first officer's teeth down his throat. He refrained from asking Sergis questions about himself, being in the habit of wishing "pasts" forgotten. The lad was a tall, powerfully made Tartar quite as formidable looking at the captain himself. The captain liked that in a way, but in his heart wondered if he could twist Sergis' neck, if necessary. Being near middle life and a bit short of wind he hoped he would never have to try. Beyond this the boy had a shock of thick blonde hair, great blue eyes, and high cheek bones, and a broad somewhat flat but well formed nose. He smiled a sickly smile after a time, showing large, regular, astonishingly white teeth.

The captain put him to work. He could shovel coal, oil bearings, and tighten a nut on a cylinder head in a temperature which would frazzle a normal

man into heart failure. In addition to this he sang ribald and indecent songs to the men on his watch. In three days the sun and the stoke-hole boiled the rum out of him. For the two days following he was melancholy, but worked on with dogged determination.

On the sixth day out, when off the coast of Crete, the tank steamer picked up a dismantled brig bound for Liverpool. The Russian captain swore big oaths, but in the end made fast and towed the disabled Englishman toward Megalokastrom, where there was a repair dock.

During the night a violent gale came up from the east. The brig cast off, but in the confusion and darkness the tow cable fouled the Russian's propeller and the two ships missed bumping each other into eternity by a miracle. The next morning the sea calmed down. Daylight found the disabled pair rocking peacefully on the waters of the Mediterranean.

Sergis and a couple of men got into a small boat and worked on the fouled cable. Fortunately it had not twisted the propeller blades, but was wound up on the shaft close to the wheel. At the end of three hours' work one last twist stuck. It was jammed into the space between the shaft bracket and the wheel bearing. Also this place was eight feet below the water line in smooth water, and all kinds of depths in a sea. In the end Sergis made twenty consecutive dives with a hammer in his hand, each time

loosening the wire cable a little. Then he sat down in the bottom of the small boat and vomited on the oarsman's feet.

The captain stood on the aft rail and yelled out instructions, to which Sergis paid no attention. Then the skipper lowered away a jug of vodka. In a few minutes Sergis was at it again. In five more attempts the cable came out. The captain ordered the men in the small boat to carry the end of a new cable over to the brig, which was close enough to make things uncomfortable, despite the fact that the tank steamer had run out a couple of sea anchors which made her drift more slowly. The brig had no spars left and couldn't make an inch not determined by drift. The Englishman, who was a sailor and knew his business, megaphoned himself hoarse trying to induce the Russian to let him run out the sea anchors, for he was water logged and could have let the tank steamer take seaway. However, the Russian was doing the towing and bossed the job, so the Englishman chewed his cud and prayed that God would be good to this fool, as he usually is to all of them.

Sergis was a bit pale and his lips were blue. When the end of the new cable was dropped into the boat he loudly and sweetly told his commanding officer to go to hell. The captain nearly toppled overboard in an effort to conjure up new cuss words. The two men in the boat with Sergis said nothing, but had some defect of vision suddenly develop, so that they could not see the end of the new cable as it dangled

over the side. In the end the captain hauled the small boat up and put in a fresh crew. Sergis sat down on the port rail and smoked a cigarette. The vodka had dispersed his fatigue. He was a little chilled and the sun felt good. The first officer had given him the cigarette and also held the match as he ignited it.

At Megalakastrom the captain of the brig came aboard. He wanted Sergis to have a few hours' shore leave, because there was some places ashore that he would like to have visited with the young giant whose white skin he had watched disappear so often under the stern of the tank steamer. The captain of the tank steamer refused the necessary permission. He said the boy was a stowaway, and hadn't done enough work to square himself.

The Englishman was a good disciplinarian and also an old follower of the sea. He muttered something under his breath which sounded to the captain of the tank steamer very much like bad advice, but Sergis didn't understand English, and was not in a position to take it if he had felt so inclined.

The Russian reminded the Englishman that he was on his ship and also under some obligation to himself, which made the Englishman apologize and take himself off the "bloody ship" as fast as he could.

At Port Said Sergis promptly deserted the ship. He had a feeling that the first officer would have to take command of the tank steamer if he stayed on

board much longer. In view of the fact that the thought of the dead Jew had already caused him so much trouble, he selected the wiser measure of action.

Leaving thus without ceremony, Sergis lost his pay and also his share of salvage money for towing the Englishman. The latter part did not disturb him much, for he feared to reveal his identity, which he would have had to do to get the money, and the lost pay didn't bother him either, for he was only eighteen years of age and had a five hundred-ruble note in his pocket, which his cousin had put there when driving him to the dock.

For six months he worked on the searchlight engines. His employers were glad to get him. Few men wanted to go back and forth on the canal. It did not tend to make them healthy. In three months he spoke English fairly well, which is about the time it takes most Russians to learn a language. Most of his spare time he spent in one of the dives of Port Said, incidentally his money also.

Bessam came into one of the resorts one night. He had done Japan and was on his way to Genoa to take passage for home. At the table next to him sat the big Russian boy buying atrocious rum for a woman who had found the Strand in London unprofitable. A swarthy Lascar sailor wished to entertain the girl. A fight developed with astonishing rapidity. Bessam caught a glimpse of Sergis' face as the men closed in. He was not surprised when a

short time later the Lascar was carried out by two police officers in khaki uniforms.

The Russian boy had a bleeding neck. When order was restored Bessam spoke to the boy, who was a trifle pale and held his handkerchief to his neck with one hand while he manipulated a glass of rum with the other. Bessam took the boy to a doctor and had his neck sewed up. The boy told his story, but his stolidity broke down as he leaked blood. Bessam decided he needed a mechanician for his motor cars in New York, and offered Sergis the job. The boy nodded his head. He also said he had money enough to pay his own passage.

Bessam had a peculiar gift for sizing up men. This had something to do with the large pile of money he had accumulated. When Bessam took a road tour Sergis drove him. Sergis never spoke unless spoken to, and what he said was usually worth while. He could put on a tire in ten minutes, and, later, when the detachable rim came in vogue reduced this to two. He also made his engine climb all kinds of grades without "going back in the gears," a feat which caused Bessam to hit his guest on the back and wink very hard. If this guest was a woman, he just looked gratified; he did not believe it worth while to expect understanding for anything except what money could buy from women. Occasionally Bessam got drunk at a roadhouse. He would then order Sergis to "open her up." Sergis never did it. Bessam always got red in the face and swore, but

Sergis never answered. The next day the incident was forgotten.

After a week of patient labor Stratford was no nearer a selection than when he started. Sergis systematically advised against each engine they saw. At last Bessam became irritable, as he was apt to when a problem looked more than he felt he could master in a hurry.

"Hell," he said in the end, "what'll we do, Sergis?"

"There is only one thing to do," Sergis answered. "Send to Cannstadt for a Daimler. It's the only engine there is."

"Why in the name of Heaven didn't you say so before?" Bessam blurted out.

"You did not ask me, sir," Sergis answered. His face was quite immovable as he said it.

"He looks like one of Verestchagin's infantry soldiers," Bessam said to Stratford. "It reminds me of what a Turkish officer said to me on the ship from Alexandria to Genoa. 'Those damned Russians,' he said, 'when you shoot them through the heart the lieutenant has to push them over. They do not know enough to fall down when they are dead.'"

Sergis joined in the laugh, but made no reply.

Two days later Sergis was on a Lloyd express steamer doing twenty-five knots an hour toward Cherbourg. Bessam saw him off. Bessam did queer things at times—that is they would have been regarded as queer, only he never spoke of them. The day

before Sergis sailed he called on the Russian Consul General. He had fortified himself with a telegram from one of his Washington men who watched Federal legislation for his steel company. The wire had the effect of making the dapper clerk at the consulate receive Bessam with deference. The Consul General had a pointed dark-brown beard, very carefully groomed, and wore a frock coat at ten in the morning. His trousers were very accurately creased and fell over light colored spats. A picture of Nicholas II hung over the mantel. The portrait was well done, and showed the ruler of all the Russias when he was still the Tsarovitch and commanded the Cossaks of the Guard.

The Consul General had been a lieutenant of Cossaks at that time, and the portrait was given him by his commanding officer for a service the nature of which was not disclosed, but would appear to have been regarded a valuable one, for the picture was presented to the young lieutenant at the annual mess dinner of the regiment, which is an occasion on which small matters are not touched upon. Later the young officer had disgraced himself with a French opera singer and was given the Consul Generalship at New York with the view of allowing time to serve forgetfulness. The Consul General was permitted to take the picture with him. The artist had made his commanding officer as he knew him, with the breadth of shoulder and the high forehead of the Romanoffs, the melancholy eyes, the somewhat childish chin of

his mother's side of the house, and his own wistful expression, born of the peculiar sweetness of character this much-maligned monarch was given so little opportunity to display.

The Consul General offered Bessam a cigarette, which was promptly declined with a grunt. The Consul smiled.

"You will have, perhaps, a cigar?" he asked. He spoke English like a phonograph.

When Bessam lighted the cigar he raised his eyebrows.

"From Gibraltar," the Consul explained. Presented to me by an Englishman with whom I exchange compliments at times."

Bessam was uncomfortable. He hadn't been in a supplicatory position in a long time. Then, too, the man's deep set dark eyes disconcerted him. He stated a hypothetical case.

"If a man had committed a crime in Russia, would any European government accept extradition service and deliver the man?"

The Consul shrugged his shoulders. "It would depend upon the character of the crime," he answered blandly.

Bessam didn't like the man. Nevertheless he plunged in and told the story, omitting names and places.

The Consul smiled faintly.

"My dear Mr. Bessam," he said after a long puff at his cigarette, "do not trouble your head, your

friend will not be disturbed. I will say this much. I know the case of which you speak. We have many important things to look after, and have no interest in a dead Jew. The living ones give us trouble enough. Nothing will be done."

He did not tell Bessam that a certain amount of money came to the Consulate every month from Odessa, with instructions to forward it to one Sergis Orloff. Also that a petition had been submitted to the Tsar for the boy's pardon, and that Bessam would perhaps soon lose his silent mechanician, and not know why.

Bessam felt like "a damned fool," as he put it to himself when the interview was over. "I don't like these infernal Russians, anyway," he muttered into his beard as he climbed into his limousine, "except Sergis," he added after a moment's thought. He did not tell Sergis about the interview. He thought he had mixed himself up enough in another man's business.

A week later Sergis walked into the motor factory at Cannstadt. Soon he was examining motors. The second day he ran across an old pal who had worked with him on the Suez. The man was a German who had gone to the Suez for a reason of which he did not speak. The cause was disregarded in the end, because he could time up an ignition system in about one-half the time it took anyone else to accomplish it. He was a foreman when Sergis met him. Occasionally he disappeared for several days. When he

came back his hand was shaky and his eyes blood-shot. It usually took about twelve hours for him to steady down. During these twelve hours it was wise not to be disagreeable to him. He had a tendency to throw things around on these occasions. His name was Mehrman, Franz Gottlieb Mehrman. He rarely saw his family. They did not like his habits. Sergis talked to him in English which they had learned at the same place, only Sergis had acquired certain American expressions which Franz had difficulty in understanding.


The pair canvassed the situation together. In the end Sergis decided on a "ninety horse" which had been assembled for an armored automobile for the Potsdam military school. Franz detected a fault in its ignition system which he felt certain would cause its being rejected by the experts at Potsdam. Strange to say the defect was remedied with remarkable alacrity after the motor was turned over to Sergis. Franz did not even wink his eye. Sergis looked stupid.

Sergis believed Mehrman in the abstract; actually he had a reservation regarding his pal, the outcome of several peculiar phenomena he had observed at Port Said. He asked Mehrman to show him the remnants of the billets from which the gears were cut. When he saw them he kissed Franz on both cheeks. Then like two glorious young idiots they went out and got thoroughly drunk.

Franz was only two years Sergis' senior. What

those two boys did not absorb in the form of alcohol was not worth listing on a hotel menu. At midnight they were arrested and locked up for assaulting a couple of English mechanics who had said deprecatory things about the German navy. The Englishmen did not wish to be insulting—they did not realize that the two drunken cubs understood their language. In court the next day the pair sat on a bench among a lot of ragged-looking malefactors. The justice held them for trial. The Englishmen were in bed. Sergis looked blank. Franz dug into his clothes and slipped the prison guard a banknote. It was the only one he had. They were put in a cell together, where Sergis sang some of his old songs. No one understood them, however, which saved him from having the charge of using indecent language made against him. Also he had a bruised eye where one of the Englishmen had punched him during the fight. He coaxed the guard to get him some more rum. Mehrman acted as interpreter after the guard had tried in vain to understand what was wanted. Then the guard brought some schnapps. The guard knew Mehrman's family, and hated to see a well-born gentleman go without rum of some kind. The pair kept the orgy up.

The next day neither of them were good to look at. At noon the two Englishmen appeared in court. They promptly perjured their souls to hell by swearing that the whole affair was only a wrestling match which had been mistaken for a fight by the police.



A well-dressed gentleman who neither of the persons directly concerned knew acted as attorney for the prisoners. The culprits looked as though a cyclone had played with them. Sergis' face had acquired additional bruises. One eye was quite closed. He had been playfully trying to teach Franz a few new wrestling tricks he claimed to have learned in America. He lied in this, which was unfortunate, for Mehrman ground his face into the stones on the floor of the cell. Mehrman knew how to wrestle, a fact Sergis had forgotten. When Sergis got the blood and dust out of his eyes he brought his heavy hand across Mehrman's mouth. The lips immediately took on the form and size of breakfast sausages. Fortunately they were too drunk to continue the friendly contest.

The justice shook his head and fined the pair a hundred marks apiece, which Sergis paid out of a fat wallet. Then the four beauties went to a neighboring café and drank themselves into tearful admiration of each other and on into subsequent unconsciousness.

The following morning Sergis led Franz back to the motor factory. He explained to the chief mechanic that Mehrman and himself had tried out a motor and slid into a ditch on a bit of slippery road. The chief mechanic was an old man who had served in the artillery at Sedan. He did not believe a word of it, but said nothing. Also there were twenty assembled engines waiting to be timed up. He put

Mehrman to work at once. After that the pair stayed sober.

Sergis spent two days testing out the engine. It turned up twenty-four hundred revolutions with the fly wheel keyed on. The painful use of pad and pencil made it clear to Sergis that when hooked up it would show ninety miles an hour on the road with the throttle down. He bought the engine. The chief mechanic showed him a fine new chassis with a shaft drive to the differential. Sergis thanked him, but ordered a countershaft and chain drive.

"This is not an engine for a woman to drive on a boulevard," he said very quietly to the chief engineer, who gave him a commendatory tap on the shoulder with a steel triangle measure he held in his hand. In another moment the pair would have adjourned to a café and then Sergis would have known why the chief mechanic was so lenient with Mehrman, but in the end put the impulse down. After that he watched every blessed piece of the car go into packing boxes, from the crank shaft to the last Cotter pin. A week later he saw with his own eyes the boxes go into the hold of an ocean grayhound at Hamburg.

Mehrman went with him to the ship. The pair sat on the stringpiece at the end of the dock. Sergis fought the demon drink like a hero. Mehrman looked longingly at a basket of French champagne which a steward was carrying up the gangway to the ship. Then the two looked sadly at each other. In the end Mehrman got up and said good-by. Sergis

kissed him on both cheeks and climbed aboard. Mehrman walked down the pier without looking back. He did not return to Cannstadt for a week; when he did, he consoled himself with the thought that at least he had had the fortitude to withstand temptation until after Sergis climbed aboard. The fact that there was an available café near the end of the dock and that he dove into it when he reached there did not lessen his admiration for his self-sacrifice one bit.

Bessam expended several of his dollars on Marconigrams. Incidentally Sergis haunted the little house on the upper deck from which he sent frequent answers. One day during a fog Bessam sent three messages, each time asking what the ship was doing. Sergis had to calculate the ship's speed with the help of the chief engineer, who gave him dead reckonings based on the engine revolutions. As a matter of fact these showed that the captain drove his ship as hard in a fog as he did at any other time, and that some men have sublime confidence in the sense of hearing. Sergis showed his training by cutting the figures down one-third when he wired Bessam. He believed that violations of the law were best not dwelt upon, especially if it were of use to himself.

Bessam was afraid the ship might founder. He would have bribed the entire ship's company to hurry the engine home. As this was not feasible, he spent his money on wireless messages. This was the outcome of a belief he had that everything was helped

by money. At the pier in Hoboken Bessam bored the dockmaster to death with questions. In the end he went down the bay on a towboat with the dockmaster, who was getting worried himself. The ship had her steering gear get out of order as she rounded into the channel and ran up a "no control" signal. The dockmaster knew that the ship could come up steering with her propellers, and wanted to find out why she did not come. He found the ship at anchor at Quarantine with a lot of newspaper reporters gathered on special press boats ready to photograph an American railroad magnate who was coming home from Europe. The dockmaster and the captain held a conversation the character of which was not good to listen to. In the end it appeared that the newspapers wanted to photograph the millionaire leaning over the rail and have an interview with him before he landed. The captain swore that his steering gear was out of order. The dockmaster and Bessam hurried back to the pier as the big ship began to haul up anchor.

Bessam caught a glimpse of Sergis standing on the bridge talking to the pilot. He wondered how a mechanic managed to be on the bridge of a great transatlantic ship. But Bessam had never dallied with gasoline engines on the Suez and had no knowledge of the code men who follow allied callings have among one another.

When Sergis stepped to the pier Bessam found him much changed. Of course his face had healed

up, but in addition to this the smutty skin all mechanics have, had cleared up. Bessam held his hand out to the mechanic, who removed his glove before he accepted the greeting.

"Well, I never will understand these damned foreigners," he muttered as he turned to a customs officer whom he had induced to await his calling with the aid of a negotiable paper.

Sergis assembled the motor himself. Stratford put wax under his finger nails and helped. Bessam sat on a tool bench and watched the work go on for many hours when he should have been taking in the fresh spring air. At times he handed over a tool. He began to feel that he was an expert because he knew the difference between a socket wrench and a lock nut. He insisted upon smoking a fat cigar with a can of gasoline standing beside him, until Sergis calmly informed him of the probable result if he kept on. He actually stopped smoking in order not to be turned out of doors. His valet spent hours soaking the grease out of his clothing, for Bessam had a faculty of sitting into a blotch of lubricating oil with a light colored coat on.

Stratford's white skin began to look smutty, also his hair was often matted on his forehead. In two days he learned how to wipe his hands on his trousers and rub an itching spot on his forehead with the back of his wrist. Before dinner he oiled up his hands and washed them in a pail of water. He used one end of a towel while Sergis used the other, the

height of familiarity among mechanics. Side by side the two men made a singular contrast. Sergis looked like a Hercules; Stratford like a model for a life class in Greek art. Sergis lifted a three hundred and fifty pound fly wheel and clutch combination without turning red in the face. When Stratford steadied the countershaft his muscles stood out like whip cords. Sergis grasped a wrench in his fist, Stratford picked the wrench up with his fingers, set and locked it and pushed a nut home without closing his hand. Stratford glanced at the engine plan furnished by the Cannstadt people and never consulted it again, during that sitting. Sergis ceased work occasionally, took the drawing out into the back yard of the machine shop and puffed a cigarette while he mused over the blue print.

In six working days the motor was assembled. The hood, the driver's and mechanic's seats Sergis put on in a couple of hours. Then he thought of Mehrman, but put the demon behind him and drank insipid water.

Stratford drove the car down to an inn near the race course. He took a bail bond with him expecting to be arrested for violating the speed law. He was amazed to find that his motor throttled down to four miles an hour with the high speed gear in. When he negotiated a grade the motor sang itself up it without his touching the gear lever. He looked at Sergis, but he was apparently intent upon a cow browsing peacefully in a field. On a back road Strat-

ford shoved the throttle up a couple of notches, and the finger of the speedometer climbed around like a magnetic needle. When it reached seventy the car began to rock in the soft road. Stratford pulled the throttle back and looked again at Sergis. Sergis reached in his pocket and handed over a pair of goggles. Stratford's cheeks had two streaks of muddy tears on them. After that he drove like a sane man. Sergis took a room at the inn.

Between training for the race and the work in the district Stratford had little spare time. As a rule the course was driven early in the morning, when traffic was light. Occasionally Mildred Fuller drove down to the little inn to see how things were going on. On these occasions she dined with Stratford at a little table in a small room set aside for the purpose. The inn-keeper, a portly, middle-aged Frenchman, served excellent dinners.

Miss Fuller appeared on the scene at sundown, very quietly attired in somber gray with a thick motor veil obscuring her face. Stratford drove down in his own runabout and sat on the veranda of the inn watching the daylight grow less manifest until the valve motion of Mildred Fuller's silent six-cylinder clicked in his ears. They sat together then quite silently watching the summer twilight deepen into gloom until the fat host broke the silence by announcing dinner.

Each time she came the innkeeper decorated the table with some wild flower. At first with wood

violets and then on to marigolds and daisies, and yet on to golden-rod and varyingly colored maple leaves.

In leafy June she drove up one glorious summer evening just as the sun went down. Stratford had worked patiently all day in the malodorous Ghetto, and at four o'clock stepped into his runabout with more fatigue than usual. Everything was in full bloom. A faint breeze which had made the late afternoon bearable died down with the fading twilight. He had tinkered with the oil feed on the big motor, and after washing up sat in a wicker chair on the side of the veranda of the inn listening to the queer insect noises coming from the foliage. He did not expect Miss Fuller, and indeed contemplated a quiet dinner, a good long restful sleep, and a satisfactory drive over the course at daybreak. He could hear the clink of Sergis' tools coming from the shed where the motor was housed as he worked on a new "exhaust cut out." The stillness of it all stole into his heart. For a moment he had a vague feeling of oppression, a nameless sensation of syncope, as though after all nothing were worth while—Hershey's cold-blooded self-satisfied conception of life, Boonton's hopeless contest with poverty, immorality, and affliction, the Russak's patient combat against overwhelming odds, Katherine Bessam's complacent selfishness, and, last, his own apparently insurmountable problem, the immensity of which he had only recently begun to see overwhelmed him. He closed

his eyes like a man who thinks his senses are made more acute by temporarily obliterating one of them.

He had seen all but nothing of Katherine since the afternoon at her tea. She had not interested herself in his work. Once he had seen her driving down Fifth Avenue in her white-lined landaulet. Hunter had sat beside her. She had on a fashionable gown and a large hat, and Hunter wore a frock coat and top hat. Stratford had received cards for Miss Burnett's tea for that afternoon. Katherine was to receive with Miss Burnett, but he had no intention of going, though he was reminded of it by a telephone message from Katherine's maid that morning. He had been on his way to his club to meet an old college mate who had come to town for a few days. Later he was to have addressed a meeting of tailors who wished for moral support in a strike for higher pay. Katherine had leaned over quickly when she saw him and lifted the tube leading to the driver's seat as though about to give an order, but must have changed her mind for the highly polished landaulet went on.

The grind of rubber-tired wheels on the gravel roadway leading to the inn startled him from his reverie. He rose quickly, and in the next moment handed Mildred Fuller out of her car. It was very warm, and contrary to her usual custom she had discarded her somber gray and thick veil and wore a duck skirt and a white waist slightly open at the neck, a bunch of brilliantly red roses at her belt, and

a red veil which hung down over one shoulder. Her hands were bare, though she had a pair of white silk gloves tied to her left wrist.

"I have braved the dust, as you see," she said gayly. "We came very carefully, however, and my color scheme is barely disturbed, I hope."

She had a linen dust coat on her arm, which Stratford took from her and laid on the rail of the veranda. Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes shone with remarkable brilliancy. She took a rose from her corsage and fastened it in his buttonhole with a pin gleaned from some mysterious source that men never know about.

The innkeeper appeared. Stratford asked him to get dinner for two. He promptly bustled off. Mildred Fuller sat down in a high-backed, stiff chair and crossed her legs.

"I would rather be here with the dying sunlight on your beautiful head than anywhere else in the world," she said.

She brushed the red veil back from her cheek. The little melancholy droop of the corner of her mouth became for an instant more manifest. The next moment her lips broke into a smile, revealing her regular white teeth.

"You come to me this evening," Stratford said slowly, "like some vision conjured up from fancy to dispel the shadows of a dying hope."

She had never seen him other than defiant. His mood startled her.

"A dying hope," she flashed back. "Dying hope for you! For you, with everything at your feet. Come, my great giant." She jumped to her feet and drew him to the edge of the veranda. "Everything is before you." She waved her shapely hand toward the dying sunlight, laid the other on his shoulder, and placed her fresh young cheek against his arm. "Conquer it," she went on in her wonderful attuned voice. "Master it. Throw the gauntlet down to all of them. You can win, and you will. I want to see it. Oh, not because of me will you win, but because it is in you—yourself. You are only just on the threshold of it all. I want only to see it. When it is done think of to-night." She slipped her round firm arm around his neck. "And think too of this." She held his lips to hers for a long time, so long that in the end he turned his head. She gave a loud joyous laugh which made a vein stand out on her white throat.

The sun dipped beneath the horizon, a luminous star broke into the deepening blue of the eastern sky. Darkness stole in the air, though yet the day was not quite done. She took off her hat and ran her fingers through her abundant hair.

Stratford watched the shadows deepen, the melancholy of a summer's twilight was still with him. She plucked a rose petal from the flower in his coat and placed it between her lips. It hung down over her white smooth chin. Her pupils became large with the increasing darkness.


"If love were all," she murmured between her apposed lips. The rose petal fluttered to the ground, where it lay a single red spot on the verdant grass.

"It is not all," Stratford retorted quickly. "It is not all that men want. If it were all I would not go far beyond what is here within my reach."

"I would not have you have it your all," she broke in with a strange intensity of voice. "No. Make it a thing apart. Make your life what I know it will be. Yet too," she added, dropping her voice so low that he leaned toward her to hear, "yet too, when there is time for it, remember to-night."

She drew his head yet closer to her, pressing his cheek against her white neck. Her own pulsating life seemed to rise from her heart and drive the hesitation from his own.

Long before the moon had ridden far into its cycle Stratford's depression had vanished and he handed her into her car with a gay peal of laughter as she called him her "great man who was to be."



CHAPTER X

SUMMER seared the Ghetto streets and baked the product of the pregnant earth into maturity. Hersey wandered over the country with his string of horses. Bessam cruised along the Maine coast. Katherine spent her days in complacent idleness on her father's yacht. Repeated invitations to Stratford and Boonton had met only regrets. Hunter spent two week-ends on board the "Cosette." A journal devoted to social affairs and blackmail recorded his visits. Its allusion to "the manifest attentions of a rising young politician to the only daughter of a steel king" made Bessam laugh very loudly.

"Maybe it'll make Jim wake up," he said teasingly to his daughter. Katherine blushed quite deeply for a woman who has concealed her emotions at fashionable gatherings as long as she had.

Boonton kept patiently on with his work. At times he drove down to the little inn with Stratford and sat in the mechanic's seat in the early dawn as Stratford drove the course. The road was usually quite deserted save for a farmer's creaking wagon laden with produce for the markets of the great city. Stratford's driving improved rapidly. He became more quiet in his demeanor as time went on. The boyish expression about his eyes disappeared, to be

replaced by a peculiar steadiness one sees in the faces of pilots and locomotive drivers. His naturally round cheek sank in the least bit and the muscles of his neck stood out more plainly when he turned his head.

Boonton did not know whether to be pleased at the change or not. Somehow he had a sort of paternal feeling for Stratford, and as he saw the mark the real contest of life was making on his friend he felt, as he put it, "like a woman who has always considered her boy a baby and is shocked to suddenly discover that he is a man."

And so the summer slipped by. The mighty Daimler tuned up better and better. Save for a loose ground wire and an occasional adjustment of the air intake on the carburetor as the temperature of the air varied, the engine was never touched. August shimmered into September. The fields became yellow. Soon they were sheared by the harvesters and stuck their stubbles reproachfully up into space, only to be swept yet more dry by rustling dead leaves.

Early in October the local convention met in the stuffy "Assembly Rooms" where Stratford had so often addressed his constituents. The night the nominations were made Stratford, together with Cosgrove, entered the long bare room with its rows of wooden benches. A small platform occupied one end of the room, with an American flag draped on the wall behind it, and underneath, in red letters on a white field, the motto: "Come and be saved."

The hall was used for Salvation Army meetings, and the motto was never taken down even during an indignation meeting called to protest against a cut in wages or to hear a bearded rabbi deliver a discourse on the discrimination against the Jew in municipal appointments.

At the end of the hall opposite the platform was a small gallery, reserved for distinguished guests and newspaper reporters. When Stratford came in he caught a glimpse of Bessam and Katherine sitting in the front row of the gallery. Bessam came because he wanted to see "Jim make his start," and Katherine came because Bessam had shown some irritability when she hesitated at his first suggestion that they go.

Bessam continued to puff at a big fat cigar despite the fact that a man had on several occasions stepped on the platform and called attention to a sign on the wall which read "No Smoking." Incidentally every other man in the place went right on smoking. The gallery filled up quite rapidly. Mildred Fuller had asked Cosgrove for a ticket, but he had flatly refused.

"Now, I will not indicate your policy to you," he said to her, "but I won't push your game along."

The girl hung her head.

"All right," she answered meekly. "Then I won't go."

Soon a chairman and a secretary mounted the platform. The chairman, a gray-haired man with a

dinner coat, a white evening vest, and a green tie, called the meeting to order. After that there was nothing more to do than to listen to motions made by Cosgrove, who read his text from a sheet of paper covered with typewritten sentences.

When Stratford was nominated the audience gave a cheer and called for a speech. Stratford stepped to the platform and told the listeners that this was no time to waste in words. They would be perhaps in a position soon to judge him by his actions. Then he returned to his seat beside Cosgrove.

"Perfectly ridiculous," Katherine said to Bessam as they passed out. "And this is the beginning of a political career, it is?"

Bessam did not answer, but continued to puff his cigar as he led the way to the door.

In the corridor they met Boonton, who had sat at the back of the hall during the meeting, in a seat beneath the gallery where he would not attract attention. He was talking to a man with a disheveled beard and heavy features as the Bessams came up. The man leaned on a stick and held one foot from the floor. The foot was only partly covered with a shoe which was held in place by a heavy black cord.

"No, we never hear from her," the man was saying. "Her mother is very unhappy ——"

"Mr. Bessam," Boonton said, turning to the portly millionaire, "this is my friend, Mr. Russak." He waved his left hand toward the man with the bandaged foot. Bessam shook hands with the man,

but Katherine hung back. Stratford and Cosgrove came along. Cosgrove stepped up to Russak.

"Hello, Russak! he said, holding out his hand. How's your game leg."

Russak smiled quite brightly.

"It is not so bad. I am glad to see you. I wanted to come and thank you for putting in a good word at the college for my Bennie."

"Never mind that," Cosgrove answered quickly. "He's a bright kid."

Stratford led Katherine to her motor, which stood at the curb while a group of urchins pestered the wattman to death with various boyish pranks. Soon Bessam came out and the limousine drove off.

The next day a brief notice in the newspapers announced the nomination of Stratford. A few days later the nomination of Hunter for District Attorney blazed into head lines.

"I wonder why he could not have done this sort of thing," Katherine said impatiently, as she handed the paper to Bessam, who was engulfing his third lamb chop at breakfast.

"You'll have to ask him that yourself," Bessam answered irritably. "You women make me tired." He pushed his plate back and wiped his mouth on the table cloth. His napkin had slid to the floor and had escaped for a moment the vigilance of the butler, who was pressing orange juice into a tall cut glass affair. "Have you no understanding for the man who wants to begin at the bottom?" he asked.

"I have no tolerance for these poses, if that is what you mean," she answered with some heat.

Bessam grunted. "Give me a cigar," he said to the butler. "Well," he said as he left the room, "I'd a damned sight better like to be Stratford than Hunter, any day."

Hersey wired his congratulations to Stratford. He was doing the Western circuit with his horses and had stopped off for a few days at Los Angeles. A few days later a letter from Hersey expressed his regret at not being able to return for the motor race. The letter was typewritten and signed by Hersey's secretary. Stratford read it with the least pang of regret. However, in the next moment he tore it across and threw it into his waste paper basket.

The motor race was set down for a week from the day that Stratford received his nomination. Much of his time was spent at the course. The day before the race Boonton drove out to the little inn in Bessam's car.

"My mother is very ill," he said after the men had exchanged greetings. "Much as I regret to leave now, I must go to her. I fear I will not be back for the race."

Boonton seemed much disturbed, and though he saw his mother but little as the outcome of his peculiar method of living, he was greatly attached to her. For the preceding six months she had been living in the old Ohio town together with a maiden sister who helped make less burdensome her life of isolation.

Bessam drove Boonton back to the city and saw him off on his train to the West.

The night preceding the motor race hundreds of motors crossed the bridges to Long Island or lined up at the ferry landings to be taken across the river. Dawn found several hundred thousand spectators lining the roadway over which the cars were to be driven.

Bessam and Katherine started for the scene at three o'clock in the morning, after a few hours' sleep and an early breakfast prepared in a chafing-dish. Bessam had a special pass from the chairman of the committee in charge of the race, and was permitted to use the course to drive to the stand after all traffic had been suspended. Despite this they did not take their seats until a few bare moments before the race began, which started at daybreak.

The six starters were lined up in tandem, the first a short distance behind the starting line. A gray fog still hung in the air, though it gradually disappeared as the sun rose higher. Stratford's gray ninety, with a big white 4 painted on its engine hood, was easily recognized among the others by its squatty outline in contrast to the high-framed rakish appearance of the American type of car.

Number 1 was already shooting blue flames from the exhaust openings. In the next moment it started with a rush. Hunter's car was Number 2. His mechanic threw the crank over and in a minute

his car lunged ahead. Number 3 started at the end of another minute. Sergis started Stratford's engine with a single twist of his mighty arm.

"Ready, No. 4," the starter shouted.

Stratford engaged his clutch gradually. The Daimler slid to the starting line. He moved the throttle lever forward with his left hand, causing the motor to race violently. He pulled the throttle back, slowing the engine down. The starter raised his arm. As Sergis raised his hand to adjust his goggles his arm hit Stratford's throttle hand, causing the port to close. The motor stopped. Instantly Sergis jumped to the front of the engine grasping the starting crank.

"Go!" the starter yelled, dropping his hand. The audience in the stand groaned. Sergis spun the crank violently. The engine balked. He tried again. No use. Stratford dismounted and lifted the engine hood. The seconds slipped by.

"You lose what time you take for repair, Mr. Stratford," the starter said.

"I am aware of that," Stratford answered calmly.

"Ready, Number 5!" the starter called.

Number 5 slid to the line beside the Daimler. Stratford pumped a little gasoline into the carburetor. Sergis tried again. Still the engine balked. Stratford stepped to the steering wheel and fiddled with the throttle lever.

"Go!" the starter yelled again.



Number 5 disappeared into the mist. Stratford saw a vision of Hunter's car taking the turn two miles away. He stepped to the starting crank and gave it an impatient twist. The engine started, slowed down, picked up again and raced violently.

"Are you ready, Mr. Stratford?" the starter asked.

Stratford bowed his head. The starter dropped his hand. Stratford mounted in the same instant that Sergis jumped into the mechanician's seat.

"A little water in the gasoline," Sergis yelled into his ear.

Stratford shrugged his shoulders as he leaned forward to throw his high speed gear in. The engine swallowed the additional burden with greed, darting forward like a hungry gull. The intermittent bombardment from the exhaust became a continuous roar.

Stratford settled in his seat. The road ahead looked like the white body of a giant moth with dark wings which separated as the car advanced. A broad white space appeared close ahead, tapering to a point farther on. A circuit of the course measured 12.64 miles. The race involved making the circuit twenty-two times, a total distance of about 271 miles.

Hunter drove the first circuit in 11.15, which was better than sixty miles an hour. For amateur driving this was a fast pace. He passed Number 1 in the first circuit.

Stratford had lost a minute and a half at the start. Adding this to the minute intervals between starters he was an actual three minutes and a half behind Hunter, though two minutes were credited him because he was scheduled to start that time after Hunter. That is, he would have to finish one minute and fifty-nine seconds behind Hunter to defeat him, and carry the same ratio with respect to the other competitors. He drove the first circuit in 11.25, a total of one minute and forty seconds behind Hunter.

Stratford planned to drive the first portion of the race without taking any unnecessary chances. The Daimler was capable of ninety miles an hour or better on the level stretches, which allowed him to ease up considerably on the turns, thus lessening the chances of tire trouble. The mist cleared up entirely and the car was running smoothly and steadily, responding instantly to throttle and spark. Like all high speed engine drivers he held the spark high in the engine cycle and drove with his throttle. Even on the turns this made slipping the clutch unnecessary.

On the second turn of the course Number 1 dropped out, with a cracked cylinder head. Number 3 was passed by Stratford on this circuit. The scoring board showed Hunter's circuit done in 11.05, Stratford's in 11.10. Hunter was driving a daring race. In the next three circuits Numbers 3 and 5 abandoned the course, one with a blazing drip pan, which soon fused the crank case, and the other with a stripped

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differential. Number 6 plodded along hopelessly outdistanced, and soon also returned to its headquarters. Hunter's and Stratford's average for these three laps stayed about the same.

On the sixth lap Stratford opened up wide. He drove the lap in 10.49, while Hunter drove it in eleven minutes flat. Stratford averaged seventy miles an hour for the 12.64 miles. This meant driving better than eighty miles an hour most of the time, for he still exercised caution at the turns. On the seventh lap he took chances and passed Hunter with a mighty roar on the back stretch. When he passed the stand ahead of Hunter the spectators yelled with glee. On the eighth turn Stratford showed a clear minute's gain over Hunter, making a total lead of three minutes, though the actual gain was three minutes and a half, allowing for the minute and thirty seconds lost at the start. On the ninth lap Stratford gained another full minute. This lap he drove in 10.43, an average of 70.75 miles an hour. This was consistent driving with the motor held in check.

On the tenth circuit the left front tire blew out with a sharp report. The car swerved. Stratford instantly steadied his motor, though he was conscious of a sharp stinging pain in his right shoulder. The tire tore from the rim, shot into the air and fell into the roadway. The crowd cheered wildly when the spectators realized that prompt action and a cool

head had avoided a calamity. If the car had swerved into the mass of people who stood beside the roadway many would have been killed or maimed. The motor slowed down.

"Your arm is bleeding," Sergis said into Stratford's ear. "You caught it on that branch when we swerved."

Stratford nodded his head, released the clutch, pulled the throttle back, and let his car slide to the side of the road.

"We have to remount a tire anyway," he said calmly, though his hands shook a little as he dismounted. The tree branch had torn the leather sleeve of his coat, ripped the white shirt and cut a formidable looking gash into the flesh near the shoulder. Blood trickled slowly from the lower angle of the wound, soaking the shirt sleeve and oozing into the gauntlet of his glove. Stratford removed his goggles. Sergis applied a bandage to his arm. The men then set to work to remount a tire. They worked with haste, but with little wasted effort. In three minutes the new tire was in place. As they mounted Hunter's car tore by. The exhaust from the side of the passing car struck Stratford's face. Hunter did not leave him much room.

"Let me fix up your sleeve?" Sergis asked.

"No. We won't bother that now," Stratford said.

Hunter's close drive as he swept by made Strat-

ford's face set. He opened the throttle to the last notch and fired the high speed gear in with less regard for his engine than he had yet shown. At the turn he slid the clutch without throttling down. Hunter's car came nearer. Ahead, the grandstand stood out against the sky. Sergis leaned forward and pressed the horn bulb. Hunter gave a quick glance over his shoulder, but held the middle of the road. Stratford was close behind now. Sergis blew the horn again. Still Hunter kept the middle of the road. Both cars were doing over seventy miles an hour. Stratford throttled down a trifle. There was not room to pass Hunter on either side. He drove his car close to Hunter's left hind wheel. If anything had gone wrong that instant somebody would have met his Maker.

"Get to hell over there!" Sergis yelled. Stratford had shut down for a moment and the roar from the exhaust ceased. Stratford coasted for a spell and then opened up again. Again he approached Hunter's rear wheel. The spectators howled a mighty protest. The cars were almost opposite the grandstand now. Here the road was wider and none of the public encroached upon it. The referee waved his arm frantically at Hunter, who slid over to the right a little. Stratford saw his chance, opened the throttle wide, and, with blue flame belching from the exhaust openings, passed Hunter just as both cars lunged past the stand.

"That fellow Hunter isn't much of a sport," Bessam said, turning to Katherine.

"Did you see his arm?" Katherine asked, with paling lips.

"Who's arm—Hunter's?" Bessam returned. "I didn't notice. What was the matter with it?"

"No, No! Jim's arm. It was all bloody. I hope he is not badly hurt."

"Wouldn't be driving if it was," Bessam answered reassuringly. "You probably saw some red clay. He lost several minutes on this turn, and I see he has a new front tire on. Probably got it dirty putting it on. Don't borrow trouble."

Katherine did not answer. She was watching the face of a girl seated in the tonneau of a large six-cylinder car which stood hard by the judge's stand on the opposite side of the road. She had noted her excitement when the two cars lunged by, had seen a strained look come into her face when Stratford began to pass Hunter's car, and noted, too, the exultant flash in her eyes when he gained the lead. All this she had noticed with a woman's quick perception, and, too, she had seen that the girl had not changed color at the sight of Stratford's bloody arm, though she herself felt sick and giddy at the thought of torn flesh beneath the gummy shirt. She looked at the man seated beside the girl. He was a strongly made, thick-set man of about forty-five, and the clean-shaven, heavy jaw looked familiar to her.

That instant she remembered him as Mr. Cosgrove, whom she had seen the night Stratford was nominated for the assembly.

"Isn't that Mr. Cosgrove?" she asked, pointing at the figure in the car.

"That's our friend with the political pull," Bessam answered. "He's a well put up chap, isn't he? Who's the girl with him, I wonder," Bessam added. He raised his binocular. "By Jove, she's a peach!" He looked steadily through the glasses. "Some tart Cosgrove is giving an airing, I guess. Well, he's got good taste. Good skin, good hair, good-looking mouth. There, I see her teeth. Good-looking heifer, I must say." He lowered the glasses.

"What is a 'tart?'" Katherine asked. She was not in the habit of asking for explanations regarding her father's characterization of men and women. She knew he had rubbed against all classes of men, and she had as the outcome of years of contact with the sturdy steel-smelter learned to disregard certain peculiar expressions which still cropped out in his speech.

Bessam laughed.

"A tart, my dear, is something sweet placed in pastry, but is not served at polite dinners," he answered, with a louder roar of laughter at his definition.

"Don't tease me, Dad," Katherine said impatiently. "Tell me. Does it mean a bad woman?"


"If a sweet thing can ever be bad, then a tart is bad," Bessam answered, still laughing.

Katherine looked thoughtfully at the girl. She was good to look at, that was certain. Yet something in her face both attracted and repelled her. She picked up the binocular. Her vision was very good, but she wanted to get a good look at the girl. The glasses were good ones, a pair Bessam had picked up in Berlin from a firm that furnished field-glasses for artillery officers. Through the glass Katherine made out the girl's peculiar fair skin, the melancholy mouth, the full red lips; and now, as the girl smiled at something Cosgrove said, the little droop at one corner of the mouth disappeared and was replaced by a frank, full smile. She could even see the long dark eyelashes sweep the cheek as the girl looked down to arrange the lap robe at her side. She noted, too, that the girl's hands moved quickly and accurately, and that the gloves she wore seemed to cover well made hands.

Bessam rose from his seat.

"I guess I'll wander over to the bar," he said. "This chill air makes me feel a bit rocky. Shall I send you some hot tea?"

"No, thank you," Katherine answered vaguely. She looked back at the girl, who was talking in an animated fashion to Cosgrove. The latter listened with an amused expression on his heavy face. Once the girl clinched her little fist and brought it force-



fully down on the side of the tonneau. Cosgrove threw his head back and laughed quite heartily at the words which went with the gesture.

That moment Bessam crossed the roadway and approached the car. He lifted his hat to Cosgrove, and was presented to the girl. He shook hands with her and became engaged in conversation at once. The girl leaned over toward Bessam and evidently said something clever, for Bessam and Cosgrove both laughed very heartily. Once in a while Bessam brushed his carefully groomed beard with a caressing gesture. After a while he left and entered the judge's stand.

Presently a boy in uniform approached Katherine.

"Mr. Bessam wishes me to escort you to the judge's stand, Miss," he said, standing with his cap in his hand. "He said they were serving hot tea there and it would be better for you to have some."

Katherine thanked the lad and followed him. She had a feeling that one reason she went was so that she could get a better notion of the girl whose car stood immediately beside the entrance into the judge's enclosure. As she reached the judge's stand Hunter's car tore by at a terrific speed.

"There goes Hunter!" Bessam called. "Something must have gone wrong with Stratford."

A man in leathers mounted on a motor cycle drove up. "Stratford's mechanic killed," he called to the referee, who was seated on top of the stand. "He's bringing him in."

An awe-inspiring silence swept over the spectators. In a few moments Stratford drove up. He steered his car with one hand and held the dead boy in the mechanician's seat with the other arm. He was very pale, and when several men lifted his burden from the car he rose slowly from his seat and threw the switch on the dash, stopping the engine. He staggered a little as he stepped to the road and leaned heavily against the guard rail.

Katherine stepped up to him. "Are you hurt, Jim?" she asked, with a trembling lip.

Stratford shook his head. He had his goggles pushed up on his cap. His face was gray and dark rings of dust and grime encircled his eyes. He smudged his face with the greasy glove as he passed his hand across his forehead. A number of spectators crowded around, but were promptly dispersed by the police.

"What happened, dear?" she asked. "Come, do not feel bad. I'm sure it was not your fault."

Cosgrove and the girl stepped up. Neither of them spoke. Two police officers carried the dead boy into the judge's stand.

"It was on the back stretch," Stratford began in the flat voice of a man whose faculties are overwhelmed by a calamity. "A child ran out from the side of the road. Sergis was bent over the dash, adjusting the oil feed. I jammed on all my brakes and swerved the car. Sergis flew out. His head struck a rock. He never moved. My God, it's awful!"

"Come dear," she said tenderly. "Your arm is hurt too. Come home with me. I'll take care of you. I knew it was not your fault. Dad's car is here and I'll drive you back."

She put her strong hand under his arm and turned him toward the gate leading to the judge's stand. They faced Cosgrove and the girl. Cosgrove lifted his hat and stepped aside. The girl remained standing before the gate. She looked steadily into Stratford's face. Her eyes blazed and she stamped her foot into the soft clay.

"You are going to give up the race for a dead mechanician," she spat out violently. "Going to weaken like a beaten cur. Get in and drive the dog into hell. He's not much ahead. You have the faster car. Go after him, catch him, and run over him if he gets in your way again."

Katherine took her hand from Stratford's arm. Stratford's face set.

"Come, Mildred," Cosgrove put in in his quiet voice, "don't make a fool of yourself. He can't drive alone, and there is no time to get another man. You don't understand. Then Mr. Stratford is hurt too." He placed his heavy hand on the girl's heaving shoulder.

"Yes, he can drive alone. Anyway, he can try," the girl spat back. She grew pale with anger and resentment. "By God, I'll drive with him!" She threw Cosgrove's hand vehemently aside. "Don't

stand there like a whipped cur. Come on. I dare you!"

Stratford did not move. She stepped to his side, took him by the hand and dragged him toward the car.

"I want you to win. Win, any way," she said in an intent whisper. "Drive until you're dead, but don't quit. You can outdrive that dog of a Hunter. Go on."

"I'll go with you if you will take me," Cosgrove said in the same quiet voice.

A sudden light came into Stratford's face. A deep flush spread over his pale cheeks. The primitive instinct of a fighting man rose in him. After all, a dead mechanician was a small thing in a contest. For a moment the thought of Sergis' poor dead face made him shudder, yet he threw the crank over, starting the motor.

"Jump in, Cosgrove," he called. Cosgrove mounted beside him. He threw the gears over in rapid succession. The car lunged ahead.

For a moment the spectators still remained silent, then a mighty roar of approval broke the tension, which did not subside until the Daimler made the first turn in the road.

Katherine stood awe-struck, silent, horrified, faint, repelled; yet strangely fascinated.

The girl gave her a withering stare, gathered her skirts about her and strode rapidly to her car, where

she sat alone, with wide-open, intent eyes awaiting the result.

Bessam had gone with the dead boy into the judge's stand. The police officers laid him on the bare floor. His leather jacket had been torn open, exposing the muscular neck and the white pallid skin of his chest. Bessam stooped down to cover the bare chest with the tattered leather. An oblong piece of parchment paper fell from the inside pocket of the jacket to the floor. Bessam picked it up. He caught a glimpse of a great red seal with a double headed eagle imprinted on it. For an instant he closed his eyes. One of the police officers had gone back to his post, the other looked on in silence. Bessam wondered if he had a right to look at the paper.

Then he unfolded it and read:

HIS MAJESTY'S OFFICE FOR THE RECEPTION OF PETITIONS

Addressed in his Imperial Name, May 16th, 19. . . .

By order of the Chief of his Majesty's Office for the Reception of Petitions addressed to his Imperial Name, the petitioner, Serjes Fedorovitch Orloff, is hereby informed that His Imperial Majesty, with reference to his most loyal petition, condescending to his request, deigns to order that the pardon is granted this day the 15th of May, 19. . . .

Bessam kneeled down beside the boy and pushed back the thick blonde hair from the bloody, gummy forehead. The pallor of death showed through the gray dust lying on the bloodless cheeks. He took out his handkerchief and wiped it off.

"Poor devil, poor devil!" he muttered. He

glanced down at the paper. "May 16th," he said quite loudly. "He must have known it months ago. Poor devil, poor devil!" He rose with some difficulty and went slowly back to the side of the course. He reached there just as Stratford made the first turn in the road.

"That fellow Stratford has plenty of nerve," he said, with a doubtful smile at Katherine. "I don't know just what I'd do in such a case. I'm sure I don't know."

He fumbled in his vest pocket for a cigar.

"Take me home, please, Dad," Katherine said meekly.

"I'll send you home," Bessam answered sharply. "I'm going to see this thing out."

He lighted his cigar with a shaky hand, turned up the collar of his coat, and looked steadily ahead at nothing.

"Very well, I'll wait," Katherine answered. She walked slowly back to her seat in the stand. "To think she could have made him do it," she mused. "And that is the kind of woman men obey. To think that her brutality would appeal more to him than my gentleness." Her eyes filled with tears. "Yet, too," she went on as though addressing herself in reproach, "yet I cannot help but feel that she was right."

She wrapped her furs about her with a little shiver. A vague notion took root in her innermost consciousness—a feeling that there was something lacking in her own self that made it impossible for

her to feel as that woman had shown she felt. Indefinitely the thought of a fallacy in herself stole into her mind. She resolved to wait until the race was over.

"That demon will not pet him if he wins," she muttered into the fur collar at her cheek. A determined glow born of the primitive Eve rose into her eyes. She squared her shoulders and settled firmly in her seat.

The score-board showed Hunter twelve minutes ahead of Stratford, and the race half over. On the next circuit Stratford drove in 10.33, Hunter in 11.20, a substantial gain.

Cosgrove's heavy face was a trifle pale as the Daimler lunged past the stand, though his square jaw was firmly set. Stratford passed Hunter on the next lap, which he drove in 10.21, though of course he was almost a complete circuit behind Hunter still.

"Great God!" a man in the audience cried, with some awe in his voice, "that's going some."

For the next ten laps Stratford constantly gained. Hunter seemed to be endowed with some mysterious luck. He never stopped except to take in petrol and lubricating oil. He kept his car going about the same speed all the time. This meant his motor was being driven at its best. On the lap before the last Stratford was an actual three minutes and ten seconds behind Hunter. When he passed the stand the spectators rose to their feet and joined in a tremendous cheer.

Katherine could not keep her eyes from the girl in the car across the road, who sat perfectly still with her hands firmly clasped in her lap and waited. Only when Stratford's car tore by did she move, and then only to lean forward as though to urge him on to greater daring.

During the last circuit the audience became silent. Stratford had to make up two minutes and eleven seconds in 12.64 miles to win. His recorded time of starting made it only necessary to finish better than two minutes behind Hunter, as he was supposed to start two minutes behind him.

Hunter's car was running steadily enough. If nothing happened to either contestant Stratford would have to push his motor to a dangerous speed to win. Though his car was easily that much faster than Hunter's, the risk of accident was of course markedly increased with the rate of speed.

Presently Hunter's car appeared over the little rise in the road a bare quarter of a mile from the finish. He drove under the flag with a rush and pulled over to the side of the road at the far end of the stand, where he stopped his engine.

The seconds slipped by. Katherine could hear the ticking of a stop watch a man who stood immediately behind her held in his hand. The man called the time at intervals. Thirty seconds, thirty-five, passed in dead silence. Suddenly a greater howl than all the rest smote the air. The audience in the stand stood up. Men on top of limousines jumped up and down

frantically waving their arms and stamping their feet in frenzy, in total disregard of the polished varnish under their feet. The squatty Daimler made the rise of the road like a monster bird starting into flight. In the next moment Stratford shot under the wire with blue flame belching from the exhaust openings and a cloud of steam rising from the radiator, forty-five and three-fifth seconds behind Hunter, and a winner by one minute fourteen and two-fifth seconds.

CHAPTER XI

THE great crowd of spectators dispersed with astonishing rapidity. It began to rain, a cold October drizzle. A mechanic from the Automobile Club drove the Daimler back to the city. Stratford drove home with Katherine in Bessam's car. He was much unnerved, and sat silent, leaning back against the upholstered body with his eyes closed until the car pulled up before Boonton's home.

Katherine, too, sat very still throughout the trip. Occasionally she wiped the cold perspiration from his forehead, but beyond this made no demonstration, nor did she allude to the scene at the course. He thanked her in a perfunctory sort of way when his destination was reached, and mounted heavily to his room.

Bessam went back to the judge's stand and the dead boy. The police officer told him the coroner had been sent for. Presently Cosgrove entered the room. He spoke to the police officer in an undertone. Then he disappeared. In a few minutes he came back. His strong heavy face was gray with dust and his hair disordered.

"That hayseed coroner will be here in a few minutes," he said in answer to Bessam's look of inquiry.

The police officer brought a chair for Cosgrove

from the stand. He had already furnished Bessam with one from the judge's platform. Bessam offered Cosgrove a cigar. The two men sat smoking in silence. The police officer stood by the window watching for the coroner. The minutes slipped by. The rain became heavier, spattering against the window panes. The air in the room became stuffy. The police officer opened the window. A gust of wind drove quite a shower of rain drops into the little chamber. He closed the window with a shiver and turned up the collar of his coat.

Bessam's face began to look drawn. The purple veins over the cheek bones stood out like miniature rivers on a yellow map. It made Cosgrove think of when he was a boy and studied geography from a much-fingered atlas. He got up and brought in some whisky. Bessam took it from the flask with a shaky hand. Some of it trickled into his beard. He wiped it off with his hand. Soon the usual red crept into his face.

"I have had the tire people hold one of their delivery motors," Cosgrove said after a time. "We can put the dead kid into it and take him to town after the coroner comes."

Bessam nodded his head and passed the flask to Cosgrove. Cosgrove shook his head.

"Here is the coroner now," the police officer called from the window.

Soon the coroner came in. He was a lanky Long Island farmer and wore chin whiskers. The police

officer had a fountain pen. He loaned it to the coroner, who proceeded to make out a removal permit. He wrote painfully and slowly. Between questions he spat tobacco juice at a crack in the floor between two warped boards. His aim was remarkably good. When he had finished he folded the paper and handed it to Cosgrove.

Bessam had walked to the window and looked at the rain soak into the earth. He was afraid to say much to the official. He had a feeling that he would tell him to take off his hat, and also feared that if he did the man might become disagreeable and order an immediate inquest, which would delay matters.

Soon the man went out. Bessam watched him climb into a mud-encrusted buggy, which was drawn by a lean, spavined old horse. As the rig turned in the road the man raised a whisky flask to his lips and Bessam could see the fluid flow down his lean neck as he swallowed, the motion of the chin whisker making a grotesque outline against the black background of the wagon top.

The police officer and the two men from the tire company lifted the dead boy into the delivery wagon. Cosgrove and Bessam followed the improvised hearse in Mildred Fuller's car, which she had sent back to the course at Cosgrove's request.

At Jamaica they stopped at an undertaker's shop, showed the permit issued by the coroner and had the dead boy put in a long pine box such as is used to cover the more elegant coffins during transportation,

as the custodian of dead people's last garb did not have a long enough coffin in stock. Then the two motors came on to a place where there was a little chapel for the reception of dead persons who have no household.

Upon reaching New York Cosgrove drove Bessam to his granite pile; then he went back to his gin-mill.

It was quite dark when Bessam mounted to his room. He had said very little to Cosgrove during the drive home, except to thank him for his loyalty in sticking by the proposition. A peculiar similarity of character in the two men made conversation unnecessary. At times Cosgrove handed Bessam the whisky flask, which Bessam silently passed back after taking a drink. Cosgrove did not take anything himself during the trip. His cigar had gone out and he chewed the charred stump with little variation of expression on his set face. The car had a folding top and the rain drove into the men's faces all through the drive, though neither of them paid any attention to it and let the wet seep into their clothing and wash the dust on Cosgrove's face into smudgy streaks. When Bessam thanked him Cosgrove removed the cigar from his mouth for a moment and made a deprecatory gesture with his heavy, thick-fingered hand, which Bessam clasped for an instant in his own fat soft one.

When Bessam reached his room his valet got his bath ready and put out dry clothes. He dined alone.

The butler told him Miss Katherine had gone out to dinner. After dinner he sat quietly down in his library, which adjoined his bedroom. He smoked in silence for a long time. At nine o'clock the butler brought in a card which read: "Count Dmetri Alexanderovitch Selenin, Russian Consulate."

Presently the man came in. He was in evening clothes and his shoes were quite devoid of blemish, despite the pouring rain which had deluged Bessam's library windows for hours.

"You will pardon me, sir," he said politely; "I presume you are Mr. Bessam?"

Bessam rose from his chair somewhat stiffly as the man came in. He was not used to sitting in a draughty judge's stand for hours late in October.

"Yes, I am Mr. Bessam," he answered.

"I will not take up unnecessarily your time," the man went on. "I am sent by my chief, the Consul General, to see you with respect to one of your late employees a ——" —he referred to a little notebook of snake skin tipped with gold at its edges—"Serjes Fedorovitch Orloff," he added.

"Sit down, please," Bessam interrupted. "Have a cigar."

The visitor bowed, took the cigar Bessam held toward him and ignited it from a match he took from a gold match safe. He hesitated before he sat down. Bessam resumed his own seat with some difficulty; his back was very lame. When he was seated the man sat down himself.

"Go on, Mr. Selenin," Bessam said, after a few moments of silence.

"Thank you, I will. What a—what you call—a beastly night," the man began. He had a clear, well-modulated voice, and spoke English with very little accent. A fleck of cigar ashes fell to his lap. He flickered it off with a well-groomed slender hand. "Your employee was a citizen of my country. We feel that perhaps it is consistent that we should take charge of his affairs. My chief instructs me to say that he has in his possession certain documentary evidence, and that it is his—shall I say duty?—to look after this affair."

The man made a peculiar gesture, as though he were sorry that any duty his office had to perform might interfere with his host's notions or be a source of annoyance to him. He stopped speaking and puffed his cigar.

Bessam nodded his head. He didn't like the representative of the Tsar's government. He rebelled against the man's smooth, cleanly-shaven cheek, the twisted mustache, the carefully parted hair. Even the man's childlike deep blue eyes annoyed him.

"Go ahead," Bessam said finally, as the man showed no inclination to proceed. "If this is your shooting match, I don't want to mix in. I guess you won't need to show me any documents. You'll have to fix the thing up with our Government."

"This is easily arranged," the man proceeded. "Indeed, the matter is now being adjusted in this re-

gard by one of my colleagues. We—that is—my chief wishes me to ask you to let him have the permit for the custody of the remains of the deceased.”

Bessam handed over the coroner’s permit.

“I have another paper that I found on the dead boy,” he said, handing over the paper with the double-headed eagle and the red seal. “It fell out of his pocket after he was dead,” he added quickly as the man raised his eyebrows slightly when he saw the paper.

“I am glad you have this,” the man said quietly. “We have of course a record of it, but are glad to get the original.”

He made no comment on Bessam’s explanation, and stuck the two documents in the inside pocket of his evening coat.

“You know where the boy lived?” Bessam asked.

“Oh, yes,” came the answer. The man smiled faintly as he added, “We will take care of his belongings. Thank you very much.”

He rose now and smoothed out his vest.

“There is probably some pay due him,” Bessam said suddenly. The commercial instinct made him say it. “I do not know about that myself; my secretary attends to that sort of thing.”

The man smiled again.

“I fancy that perhaps this matter may be disregarded,” he answered slowly. “However, you business men look at things in a different way from us—shall I say?—officials. If you feel you do not wish

to be obligated to your mechanician,—which I quite understand,—it may be proper to state that my chief would be glad to have you turn over the amount due him to some charity you are interested in. We are not in a position to take official notice of any indebtedness of the sort you speak of. You must not feel offended,” he added hastily, with the same gesture he had made when he first began to speak, when he saw Bessam’s look of annoyance. “It is simply that we wish not to have on the record this sort of thing.”

“Well, I guess it’s all right,” Bessam said doubtfully. He rose now with a little grunt of pain and put his hands on his hips. “Tell me,” he asked, “will you have a ceremony in connection with the final disposal of the remains of the deceased?—as I suppose I ought to put it.”

He chewed the end of his cigar with unnecessary force when he finished.

“Oh, yes, indeed!” came the answer, in the same polite quiet voice. “He will be removed at once to the vault at the Greek Catholic Church. The ceremony will be at ten to-morrow morning. We would be glad to have you attend, sir.” There was the least little change of intonation in his voice and the childish eyes became intent for an instant. In the next moment he smiled again. “Mirova has kindly consented to sing. You have heard her?”

“No,” Bessam answered.

“That is too bad. She has a wonderful voice. You are perhaps not fond of the opera?”

"I go at times, but I have not heard of—what's her name?"

"Mirova," the man answered, with a polite, low-pitched laugh. "She made quite a furor in Petersburg. She has left us for a time to get some of your American dollars. But perhaps we get her back again."

He laid the half-finished cigar on a lava ash tray which stood on the edge of a large black walnut writing table near which he stood. He did not like cigars, but he had been in the diplomatic service long enough to do with grace things he did not like. "I have taken up much of your time," he went on. "In the name of my chief I offer thanks."

He bowed quite profoundly. Bessam noted that his hands stayed close to his thighs as he bent forward and that his back was broad and sturdy as he turned toward the door.

"Good-night!" Bessam said.

The butler helped the man on with his coat. He lighted a cigarette when he gained the vestibule and blew the smoke out into the wet October air with a little sigh of relief. The next moment he stepped into a dark green limousine and was whirled away, though he did not give the driver any order as to destination.

Bessam sat very still after the man left. The great clock in the corner ticked and ticked. Suddenly a big tear splashed on his fat puffy hand. He watched it spread out on the waxy skin.

"The first one since Kitty's mother died," he said half aloud. "Poor devil, poor devil!"

He sat thus for a long time. His cigar went out. Ashes fell to his waistcoat and rested in the folds of the garment over his paunch. He left them undisturbed.

Katherine came in. She had an evening cloak over her bare shoulders. She came and stood beside her farther's chair. He looked like a great overgrown boy to her, with his hands folded over his paunch and the streak of ashes on his vest.

"You are not feeling very well, Dad?" she asked.

"Oh, yes. I guess the weather has depressed me."

She dusted the ashes from his vest and took the cold cigar stump from his lips with her gloved hand.

"I wish he had not finished the race," she said suddenly.

"I felt like that too, dear," Bessam answered. "But there was a man to see me just now. He came from Sergis' people. I do not understand these foreigners, yet the man made me feel that, after all, the problem of life is not to be met with emotions, and the world must not stop for a dead mechanician."

"I felt for a time yesterday that I wanted Jim to win at any price. Yet since then I have felt that the price was a big one to pay. I know the world should not stop for a dead mechanician—nor for a woman's heart. Good-night!"

She stopped at the door to get his answering wish for the night. It did not come. She came back to his chair.

"It is so unlike you, Dad, to feel so bad over a thing like this. Oh, I know, I too felt how terrible a thing it is to go to another world without a single gentle note. The thought of that poor dead boy so alone in that cold place at the race course was awful to me. Yet that thought was transient enough. I will be honest with you, Dad. It was for only fleeting moments. Another pain came with it all that was much greater. Oh, Dad, Dad, is life made up like this?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Kitty. Don't cry, dear." He rose and put his arm around the girl's waist. "I'm sure no one knows."

He led her to the window. The rain drove down in sheets, ruthlessly tearing off some of the yet remaining foliage from the already quite bare tree branches. A gust of wind tore off a number of dark brown leaves from a sturdy elm which stood hard by the retaining wall of the Park on the opposite side of the roadway. One rebellious little one still clung tenaciously to a slender twig which bent widely with the wind. Suddenly this too came loose and sank to the rain deluged asphalt just as a great motor car drove by, laden with women in evening gowns and men with top hats. The rear wheel of the car flattened the persistent little beggar against the glittering asphalt, where its outline was clearly

visible in the streak of light reflected from a near-by arc lamp.

"Guess maybe the world is right, Dad," Katherine whispered, as though she feared the great clock or the oak rafters overhead or perchance the empty armor in the corner might hear what she said. "I guess maybe we are wrong. The world must go on."

"Come, dear, go to bed," Bessam said more gently than he had spoken in many many years. He led her by the hand to the door and kissed her on the forehead.

"They do some sort of a stunt with Sergis in the morning," he added, with a boyish hesitation in his voice. "If you want to come, I'll have you called in time."

The girl nodded her head and went out.

When Bessam and Katherine drove up to the queer-looking church with its yellow and blue dome Stratford stepped up. He wore the obligatory frock coat and black gloves. He was a trifle pale, and lifted his hat with his left hand.

"Your arm is not badly hurt, I hope," Bessam asked.

"No, only a scratch. It will be healed in a few days," Stratford answered.

Katherine greeted him with a mute bow. They went into the church together. The organist played the second part of Chopin's somber march very softly. Perhaps a dozen men sat grouped at either


side of the casket which stood in the aisle near the altar.

Katherine and the two men entered a pew behind three bearded men who sat looking rigidly ahead. The one on the aisle had a ribbon in his button-hole. All of them carried canes, over which they held their black gloved hands folded in precisely the same manner. Presently a very tall priest—who also wore a beard—appeared through a door near the altar. An altar boy brought in a bunch of white roses and laid it on the silver cross of the black velvet drapery which covered the coffin. The priest mumbled the ritual. It was very brief. He did not read it from the book, but recited it rapidly from memory. Soon he ceased speaking entirely. A moment's silence followed.

Katherine had become accustomed to the dim illumination. She saw Cosgrove sitting over in the corner where the shadows were deepest. A woman sat beside him. She wore a dark gown and a thick veil. Katherine recognized the girl who had sent Stratford back into the race. That moment Mirova's voice broke the silence.

*"Mes vers fuiraint, doux et freles,
Vers votre jardin si beau,
Si mes vers avaient des ailes
Comme l'oiseau,"*

she sang with the pleading quality of voice that only



singers know when they too have made an appeal to the unknown arbitrator of man's ultimate destiny.

"Si mes vers avaient des ailes comme l'amour."

The last note lost itself in the rafters overhead. One great sob came from the woman with the dark veil who sat beside Cosgrove. The men with the frock coats and the canes sat yet immovable, with their faces directed rigidly toward the altar. Katherine's tears fell frankly to her black gown.

Four men carried the coffin with its bunch of white roses down the aisle past the rigid men,—who had risen, and now faced stolidly toward the center of the church,—and on into the brilliant October sunshine. The little group of visitors watched the men slide the coffin into a waiting wagon, which drove off rapidly.

Selenin approached Bessam.

"We send him home," he said quietly. He held his top hat in his hand. "He goes to-day on a French steamer to Havre, then on by the Paris-Warsaw express. I thought you would like to know. That is why we use this method of transportation." He indicated the wagon which was rapidly receding. "After all," he added, with the same polite smile he had used during the interview with Bessam in his library the night before, "the fact that we have deviated a little from established customs calls for the explanation I am making."

Bessam presented him to Katherine and Stratford.

"I fancy you are not familiar with the ritual of our church," he said, addressing himself to Katherine. "We maintain a great simplicity in it, the opinions of many notwithstanding." Then to Stratford, as Katherine did not answer at once: "I congratulate you on your success of yesterday." He turned again to Katherine, whose cheek was yet wet with tears. "It is good of madame to come to our little ceremony," he said, still with his hat in his hand. "I am sure my chief, who has been suddenly called to Washington, will be grateful to you. I assume I have the right to express his thanks."

Katherine still remained silent. She was watching the girl with Cosgrove get into her motor. Stratford stood on the steps leading to the entrance of the church. Katherine wondered if the girl would bow, but she drove off, looking steadily ahead.

A woman with a white shirtwaist, a short walking skirt of light gray material, and diamond earrings emerged from the church. Selenin had replaced his hat. He removed it as the woman came nearer.

"Ah, Madame Mirova, your voice gets more beautiful every day," he said to the woman in excellent French.

"I was not in good voice this morning," the woman answered, also in French. "You are the same flatterer, like all you who have to lie for the Government."

She carried a dark dust coat on her arm. Selenin presented her to Katherine and the two men.

"Selenin always asks me to do things of this sort," Mirova said, with a little laugh. "He thinks perhaps I do not need to sleep after a fatiguing night at the opera."

Her speaking voice was astonishingly unpleasant and harsh, though she spoke English with apparent ease. Katherine thanked her for the opportunity to hear her thus, undisturbed by the conditions under which most great singers are heard.

The singer rested her hand on her hip for a moment, enhancing the outline of a full bust. Beyond this she had fair skin, ink-black hair, dark gray, deep-set eyes, high cheek bones, and full, red, mobile lips. A shadow on the upper lip suggested masculinity, which was quite in accord with the breadth of shoulder and depth of chest. Her hair was crowned with a green "Frenchy" little motor hat that came down over her ears. Two red cherries hung down in front of one ear. One of them seemed to irritate her, for she raised her hand and tucked it into the thick hair at the temple. A sturdy muscle wrinkled the sleeve of the waist as she raised her hand.

Gradually the bearded men with the canes disappeared. Most of them wore little ribbons in their button-holes. All were well groomed. None of them seemed to see the Americans. One of them bowed very elaborately to Mirova as she advanced to enter Selenin's car. He was more slender than the others and had great wistful, boyish blue eyes.

"Probably not famous for their brilliant conversation," she said, indicating the Americans with a pert nod of her head. She said it in Russian, and followed it with a gay laugh which caused her voice to display some of its musical quality in contrast to the harshness of her mother tongue. "Bah!" she added, "you may take me to breakfast."

She bowed with rather more grace than one would expect from her somewhat haughty demeanor, and handed her dust coat to Selenin, who promptly helped her into his own car. Selenin bowed at precisely the same angle he had bent to each time the occasion arose, and drove off with the singer, who instantly began to talk with much animation, making considerable use of her hands.

Bessam's car drove up and Katherine and Stratford mounted into it. The slender man touched Bessam on the shoulder. He was quite young and somewhat delicate-looking.

"I was at the Polytechnic with him at Odessa," he said, with the least little tremor in his voice. "I would be glad to have you know that I will write his sister that you came here on this morning. She will say a prayer for you. She is the only one who will care much. She has known only sorrow in her young life. I do not know your English well enough to say it right, but you will understand, maybe."

He held his hat in his hand, exposing curly light brown hair, in which the sunlight made queer-looking shades.

Bessam held out his hand. "Thank you," he said simply. The young man turned away. Bessam climbed heavily into his car, and ordered his man to drop him off at his club. Then Katherine drove Stratford to Boonton's home. Neither of them spoke during the drive through the crowded streets. Katherine had great dark shadows under her eyes, her cheeks were pale, and her usually obtrusive figure looked almost slender in the dark gown she wore. Stratford thanked her in an embarrassed sort of way as he dismounted. She nodded her head and drove off.

Boonton met Stratford at the door of his house. He was in deep mourning, which accentuated his almost gaunt figure and white skin.

"Mother died the night I arrived," he said, in his quiet way. "I did not wire you. You never knew her and I did not wish to disturb you. I am so glad you won." He led the way to the library. He was strangely shaken. "And so poor Sergis is dead," he added, as he sat down with some show of fatigue. "Poor boy!"

Stratford told him of the race. Boonton listened patiently, with his characteristic disregard for what was in his own heart. Then he sent Stratford off to his club and started on his round of duty.

Boonton did not come in to dinner, so Stratford dined alone. Much had happened in Boonton's absence and many needed him. He telephoned his regrets, however, with usual thoughtfulness.

After dinner Stratford stretched out on the big sofa in the library and fell asleep. At ten o'clock the Japanese boy woke him up and handed him a note from Mildred Fuller. In it she begged him to come to her. He rose quickly, slipped into a light coat and took his way to the little house near the river. He found her sitting before a blazing log fire in the drawing-room. She wore the dark gown she had on that morning in the Greek church. She jumped up as he came in, with her great eyes wide open and her full red lips parted. Something in his face stopped her. She took him by the hand and led him to a big chair facing the fire and brought him a cigarette. She watched his face as he lighted it. It was rigid. For the first time she noted the change in him that Boonton had already seen—the slightly sunken cheek, the little lines at the corners of his eyes, the slight angularity of his square wide shoulders, and the look of watchful repose in his eyes. He wore his hair cut quite close, accentuating two depressions on either side of his neck. An indefinable awe crept into her heart, such as athletes feel at times when they first realize the possibility of defeat at the hands of an opponent whom they have not seen until the moment of the contest. She sat down in her own chair and smiled bravely into his face, as he turned toward her.

"You made me win that race," he began. He looked away from her when he noted the troubled look in her eyes and stared into the flickering flames

in the fireplace. "Yet, too, you did something else. You showed a characteristic which repels me. Cosgrove is right. Boonton is right. I have been blind, blind to everything but your allure."

"I couldn't help it," she put in. I wanted you to win. I know what I did was not what women of your class would have done—not what that daughter of Bessam's would have done." Her eyes flashed ominously at the last words. The defiant expression died down at once, however. "Think of that one night last June. You remember it. That night at the inn, Jim." Her voice became caressing. It had a pleading note in it which made Stratford wince.

"I do remember it," he went on. "That is the fallacy of it all. I have gone over it all in my mind. It's no use. I have resolved to put you out of my life." He continued to stare at the flames.

"Look me in the face and say that again," she said. He did not look up. She came to him and turned his face toward her, with the palm of her hand against his cheek. "Now tell it to me again."

He looked her straight in the eyes.

"I am going to put you out of my life," he repeated steadily. His eyes did not waver.

She took her hand from his cheek.

"So it has come at last," she said, with her wonderfully attuned voice dropped to a whisper. "I understand. I must go the way of the woman of my class. It is like my conception of you, for you to come to me and tell it to me yourself and not have

it come to me through another. Oh, I knew it had to come some time." She dropped to her knees beside his chair and rested her smooth white forehead against his arm. "Yet, too," she went on, still in an intent, clearly audible whisper, "I held it away from my thoughts as long as I could. You will not blame me for that?" She raised her face. It was very pale and her dark eyes stared fixedly at the fire. "At times I thought I would end it all. When I was alone at night and the thought crept into my heart that some day this would come, I prayed to God to give me strength to bear it. Then came the thought of how easy it would be to end it all. Only to-night, when I came in, I found this lying on my table." She rose and went to the mantel. "See this little Japanese dagger. Cosgrove sent it to me to-day—'to use as a paper cutter,' he said in his note. It had been given to him by a friend who has returned from the East. It made me think of Madam Butterfly. You remember the song of the dagger? To me it was almost an omen."

She stood thus silent for some time, toying with the little blade, her dark head bent over, the light from the fire making queer glints in her abundant hair. Suddenly she raised her head. Her eyes flashed and a crimson flush swept over her cheeks and neck.

"But, my God, I had you!" she cried, her voice becoming full and strong. "I had you! That cannot be taken away from me. You were mine, and

mine alone. I made you forget everything when I had you."

Stratford rose.

"Listen to me," she said, stopping him with her hand on his shoulder. "I can't let you go! I can't do it!" I will make you forget the Assembly, the laws, your ambitions, and those of your cold-blooded devil of an uncle. Let them go to hell!" She raised her voice when she added the last sentence. "I will hold you so fast," she went on, as Stratford made no answer, "so fast that nothing can take you from me." She placed her arm around his neck. "I will keep my arms about you until they have to cut them off to get you away from me. I will breathe my love into your heart so hard that it will always stay there. You will see only me."

Stratford loosened the arm around his neck. She stepped back.

"I wish God would strike you blind, so that I could lead you only where I want to go," she began again. "Have mercy on me, my God—don't tempt me! I wish I could blind you myself ——"

Stratford reached for the hand that held the little Japanese dagger. She stepped back another step, with paling lips. Suddenly she darted forward and swept the blade across his face. Stratford quickly raised his hand. The blade sank into his cheek close to his eye, spilt the flesh to the corner of his mouth and slid to the angle of the jaw. Blood streamed down his neck.

"I did not mean it. Oh, God, forgive me!" she wailed. "Jim, dear, speak to me. I did not mean it! I did not mean it!"

Stratford did not answer. He stood silently leaning against the mantel.

"Say you forgive me," she plead.

No answer.

Then, without another word, she drove the blade deep into her bosom.

Her lips paled still more.

Stratford sprang to her and held her up with his arm around her waist. Blood dripped from his face to hers.

"Don't look away from me, Jim," she whispered. "Don't take your eyes from me. I can only just see them."

She dropped the dagger to the floor and raised her hand to his mutilated face.

"It's getting all black before me," she went on faintly. "Oh, look at me, Jim. I did not mean to spoil your eyes. I only loved you so much. Don't leave me until I am dead." She kept her dimming eyes on his face. "Kiss me, Jim. Only once more."

He could barely hear the words, but bent down and placed his lips on hers. Her icy breath chilled the blood on his cheek. He carried her to the divan under the copy of the Meissonier, with the hussar who still held his bugle aloft. Her lithe young body gave one great shiver and lay still.

He passed out into the dimly lighted street. His

wound bled profusely. He turned up the collar of his coat, pulled his hat down over his eyes and held his handkerchief to his face. Boonton let him in.

"What has happened?" he asked in his quiet steady voice. Stratford did not answer. Boonton led him to the library and examined the wound, then he telephoned for a surgeon. While waiting for the surgeon he busied himself controlling the bleeding as best he could. Stratford was very pale, but did not become faint. He seemed dazed, and sat patiently quiet while Boonton made pressure on the wound with his deformed hand, using the other to change the cloths. He did not ask for any further explanation.

Soon the surgeon came in. He practiced in a district where wounds are often inflicted. He asked no questions. He never did, nor did he concern himself with how an injury had been inflicted unless he had reason to expect a fatal outcome, in which case he quietly notified the police without entering into details himself. He was the type of man who regarded the practice of his profession a matter of relieving affliction. The other aspects of the problem he left to the police. He thought they were paid for doing detective work.

He worked rapidly and accurately. When Stratford winced at the introduction of the needle he curtly asked him if he wanted to take an anaesthetic. When Stratford shook his head, the surgeon went on without any comment as to whether he had any re-

gret at the pain he was causing. Soon the wound was dressed.

"Will he be badly marked?" Boonton asked, as the surgeon packed up his things.

The surgeon nodded his head.

"He will not be as good to look at as perhaps he was before," he said, with a faint smile. "You might give him a little brandy at intervals, though he has not much shock. I do not insist upon it," he added, "If you have any prejudice about alcohol. I understand you are a clergyman."

Boonton did not answer. He helped the surgeon on with his coat and went to the door with him.

"Do you want me to see him again?" the surgeon asked as he stepped out.

"We will let you know," Boonton answered.

The surgeon stopped on the steps leading to the street.

"I am at your disposition, if required," he said. "If you turn him over to his own physician, let him call me on the wire. I would tell him what I used in making the repair."

He lifted his hat and went on, whistling softly to himself. Twenty-five years of arduous work had made him automatically careful and technically thoughtful. Personally he didn't care much, but he wanted his work to be successful. Boonton had seen him driving in the district in an old-fashioned doctor's phaeton, and had often admired his strong quiet face as he went along on his mission of relief.

"Are you ready to tell me now?" Boonton asked Stratford as he re-entered the library.

Stratford told him the story, not without some difficulty, through his bandaged face.

"Poor, poor child!" Boonton said, when Stratford finished. "Poor girl! God have mercy on her soul."

The men sat in somber silence for some minutes.

"Send for Cosgrove," Stratford said at last. They waited silently until Cosgrove came in.

Cosgrove sat with his hands folded in his lap until Stratford finished.

"I'll take charge of this affair," he said a trifle huskily. He rose and reached for his hat. "We will have to reconvene the convention," he added, turning toward the door.

"Wait, Cosgrove," Stratford said. He rose a little unsteadily. "I am afraid I can't write ——" he began as he seated himself at Boonton's desk.

"To-morrow will do," Cosgrove said.

"I'll try now," Stratford objected, with a note of bitterness in his voice. With some effort he wrote the letter resigning the nomination. Cosgrove stuck it in his pocket without comment.

"I'll be back before the police get started bungling the thing," he said from the door. "We should be able to hold the thing down to only one front page article," he added with a shrug of his massive shoulders, and went out.

Boonton helped Stratford to the sofa, where he

lay very still, with his hands folded over his chest, staring at the ceiling with his unbandaged eye.

Boonton sat at his desk with his cheek resting on his deformed hand. Once he rose and covered Stratford up with an afghan, which Stratford acknowledged with a wave of his hand. Then he sat down again at his desk and waited.

In an hour Cosgrove came back. With him came two heavily built men who wore thick-soled shoes, also a dapper little man whom Cosgrove called "Mr. Coroner."

The coroner had his secretary with him. He was an Italian, and was elected to office on the theory that the interests of the Italian laborers' families were best conserved in this way, as a large number of his people were killed annually in premature explosions of dynamite in excavations where they worked. He was a much respected man in the great city, chiefly because he had attacked with considerable success the Italian "Padrone system." Unfortunately he did not speak English very well, and was made the butt of what was regarded as clever newspaper sarcasm in this connection whenever he held an inquest. He bowed very politely as he came into the room and seated himself at Boonton's desk, at the latter's request. His secretary, an American, sat beside him, first moving the electric drop light closer, opened a leather portfolio and became at once engaged in making notes.

The two men with the thick-soled shoes sat at

either side of the door. They placed their hats beside them on the floor and folded their arms across their chests like two trained animals. They might have been dumb or deaf or both, for they gave no sign of interest in what was going on. Cosgrove and Boonton remained standing.

The coroner asked a number of questions in a polite, quiet voice, which, together with the answers, the secretary wrote down. When he had finished he lighted a cigar which Cosgrove gave him.

"I will parole you until needed," he said to Stratford. "This is a very unfortunate affair. You will be kind enough to allow me to give expression to my sorrow."

He had learned this by heart and said it on all occasions where it was possible to use it. His secretary had taught it to him, with much patient labor. Then he went out, together with the secretary and the two men. The two men picked their hats up at precisely the same moment and stood facing each other as the official pair passed out. Cosgrove followed immediately.

"We are going over to the girl's house," he said. "I'll see you to-morrow."

In a moment he could be heard talking to the men, who had waited at the foot of the stairs.

The next day the press had something to print. Despite Cosgrove's manipulations, they printed a lot. Stratford's story was quoted, yet in all the newspaper reports there was a note of suspicion. It

was regarded a strange coincidence that the little Japanese dagger should have been so available just about the time Stratford would find it burdensome to be identified with a woman who did not belong to his own sphere of life. Some of the papers skilfully insinuated that further investigation would develop additional facts which might justify a different conception of the cause of the unfortunate victim's death. The coroner was censured for allowing Stratford to remain at liberty on parole. One paper which was read very largely by the working classes printed a long editorial on class distinction made by officials who had no right to parole a member of a wealthy family and throw a poor man into jail to await the outcome of judicial investigation. The article was replete with verbose sentences calling attention to the fundamental constitutional principle of the form of government under which we were supposed to live, but which was made elastic if money were brought into play.

Stratford was amazed. In the pain and sorrow he felt at the entire affair it had not entered his mind that he might be suspected of killing the girl.

Bessam drove down to Boonton's house early in the morning following the occurrence. He fumed and roared at the newspapers.

"For God's sake," he sputtered out in the end, "are the whole damned lot of us to be roasted by a lot of yellow journals!"

Most of the newspapers enlarged on the affair



and included biographical sketches of Bessam, Hersey, and Boonton.

Of course Boonton did not care. If Hersey cared no one knew it. He continued to race his horses over the Western circuit.

Cosgrove came in daily. He usually sat at Stratford's bedside without indulging in any conversation, and at the end of ten minutes left as silently as he entered. Boonton went with Cosgrove to the burial ceremony at the Catholic church which Mildred Fuller had attended. In the last minute Bessam drove up in his limousine and took a seat in the last pew near the door. Stratford was confined to his bed with a surgical fever.

The press commented on Bessam's attendance at the funeral. One paper said sarcastic things about the "millionaire poseur." Bessam swore great oaths when he read the article. "I never saw the girl but once in my life," he said incautiously to a newspaper reporter who had nagged him for twenty minutes. "If I choose to show my respect for a woman who died as this poor child did, it's nobody's damned business but my own," he fumed.

"Are you willing to state," the reporter asked, whether your daughter was engaged to Mr. Stratford or not?"

"I refuse to answer," Bessam roared back. "I regard that question as a piece of infernal impudence." His face became purple as he answered.

These two sentences formed the basis of a column

article on the front page of a newspaper the next morning, and a shorter one in the evening edition.

A few days later Cosgrove made his usual visit at the Boonton house.

"She left a will," he said suddenly. "In it you are the executor and sole beneficiary, Stratford."

Stratford buried his bandaged face in the pillow with a moan which made Cosgrove bite his lip.

At the end of two weeks the inquest was held. Stratford's face had quite healed. He came into the dingy Coroner's Court flanked by Boonton on one side and Cosgrove on the other. He had insisted that Bessam stay away. When he took the witness stand his face was very pale. The scar on his cheek extended straight from the corner of the eyelids to the angle of the mouth and then curved backward to near the angle of the jaw. It was bright red in color, and somewhat elevated above the skin. He gave his testimony in a monotonous, barely audible voice, which caused the last jurymen to lean forward and ultimately ask the coroner to tell the witness to speak louder.

The jury returned a verdict that the deceased had died as the result of a stab wound of the heart, the manner of its infliction not being determinable from the evidence presented, and recommended that the matter be taken up by the grand jury.

The verdict was unexpected. The coroner frowned. In a few moments he began to read from a slip of paper his secretary handed him.

"There is of course nothing in the verdict," he read with some difficulty, "which warrants the arrest of anyone. However, it is also not a vindication of Mr. Stratford. I think the matter had best be left as it is, and if the police find sufficient evidence to warrant its submittal to the grand jury they may do so."

He flashed a defiant look at the reporters who sat to one side of the court-room. The next day the newspaper reports made much fun of the coroner's new method of procedure.

"What in hell does this mean?" Cosgrove said with some emphasis, as the three men emerged from the court house. "There is something queer about this. Tell me," he asked turning to Stratford. "Have you any enemies sufficiently bitter against you to dally with a coroner's jury?"

"None that I know of," Stratford answered wearily. "Of course," he added in a moment, "there isn't a chance for a conviction, no matter what they do. I am sure of that."

"So am I," Cosgrove said, with a troubled look on his face. "But they can make it infernally uncomfortable for you, and that's no joke."

The men passed out into the street. As Stratford stepped to the sidewalk a man in a dark double-breasted coat stepped up to him.

"I am a police officer," he said. "I have been instructed to bring you to court if the coroner's jury did not vindicate you. Will you come with me? I

have no right to apprehend you and you need not come unless you want to."

"I'll go," Stratford answered.

The four men entered a taximeter and drove to the court-house in Essex Street.

"This is largely a matter of technical form," the judge on the bench said when Stratford was led to the platform before him. "I will admit you to bail."

Stratford waited patiently, standing among a group of men and women charged with minor offenses until Cosgrove had the necessary documents filled out.

"What does all this mean?" Boonton asked as the men re-entered the taximeter. He had not spoken until then.

"It means," Stratford answered, "that they wish to cover the ground in case the grand jury finds a true bill against me. As matters stand now it would be best to have the grand jury take the matter up and settle it. In any event, it means I have either to answer the charge of murder or have the complaint dismissed. It will always be on the record, however, that I was held in custody for causing the death of Mildred Fuller. And I suppose I did, really," he added, with a painful distortion of his mutilated cheek.

"Well," Cosgrove put in, "you have to pay something for your dancing. Don't be a short sport."

"I agree with you, Cosgrove," Stratford answered simply. "I am willing to pay."

"It won't be as bad as it looks now," Cosgrove said hastily. "Forgive me, Jim, but I feel like hell about that poor dead kid."

"And I like you for it, Cosgrove," Stratford answered. He drove Cosgrove to his ginmill. Then he ordered the man to drive to the rectory of Mildred Fuller's church.

Father O'Neil received the men in his library. He was a tall, slender man with thick gray hair which he kept closely cropped, great, dark eyes, and heavy black eyebrows.

"I am the executor of the Fuller will," Stratford began as he seated himself with his right cheek toward the light.

"Yes, sir," the priest answered politely. Like all men of his calling he was a good listener.

"I of course have a right to make whatever disposition of the estate that I wish," Stratford went on. "I am an attorney. You may take my opinion as accurate in this connection. Whatever the reasons may be why I do not wish to make use of the estate as my own I fancy need not be stated. I came to ask you if there is not some institution in which you are interested, in this parish, which would be benefited if the estate were used as an endowment in its behalf."

The priest did not answer at once. He looked thoughtfully out of the window at a solitary maple tree which yet held a number of yellow leaves on its branches.

"Is the fact that the estate was owned by a woman who offended against the Church a deterrent?" Stratford asked.

"I think not," the priest answered gravely. "I will take the matter up with the Archbishop. I'll let you know in a few days."

"Thank you," Stratford said. He laid his card on the priest's desk and passed out with Boonton, who had been a silent witness throughout the little interview.

A few days later the matter was arranged, and soon the estate, which amounted to three hundred thousand dollars, was placed in trust, the income to be devoted to the use of the hospital of the Catholic sisterhood in the parish where Mildred Fuller had lived.

CHAPTER XII

HUNTER was elected district attorney by an overwhelming majority. His campaign had been a forcible, brilliantly handled one. In addition to his own election, he carried the entire State ticket with him. Both the houses were Republican. Even the Democratic strongholds in the populous portions of the great city of New York went Republican despite the strenuous efforts of the local leaders and their constituents. Cosgrove carried his district, though only by a small margin. The Democratic "chiefs" were astounded. It was conceded that Hunter had "done the trick."

The grand jury in session at the time of Mildred Fuller's death did not take her case up. The new grand jury devoted its energies to investigating election frauds. November slipped by.

Stratford continued to live with Boonton. Bessam came to the little house in Delancey Street and dined with the two men. The scar on Stratford's face did not fade. At times it was purple; usually it was a livid red in color.

Hersey came home in the first week in December. Bessam called on him at once. He found him much altered. His cheeks had become hollow and the great square shoulders stooped when he walked.

He was in his usual evening clothes, very carefully groomed, and had the obligatory cocktail at his elbow when Bessam came in. He smoked a cigarette and, contrary to his habit, rose, though somewhat painfully, when Bessam came toward him. Bessam plunged in with characteristic directness.

"Hersey," he began, "you are a damned brute. Here is a chance for you to cast off your infernal arrogance and stand by your own, and you dodge behind your pride and leave the thing to a ginmill keeper and a red-headed sky pilot."

It was like him to say nothing of his own thoughtful consideration of the young man.

Hersey walked slowly to the great mahogany mantel and rested one slender white hand on its shelf. When he turned Bessam realized the great change in him, and felt a trifle sorry that he had been so forcible.

"Bessam," Hersey answered in a flat toneless voice, "I am an old man. I will not tell you what this affair has done to me. Look at me good and hard and you will see it for yourself."

He puffed his cigarette in something of the old defiant manner and resumed: "At times I must admit I felt as though I wanted to go to him and help him with my advice and perhaps my moral support. Each time, however, the words I uttered to him when I first consented to withdraw my objections to his method of procedure came into my mind and killed the more generous impulse in my heart."

"If I had a boy," Bessam broke in with a little more gentleness in his voice, "by the eternal God I'd go to him if I knew he had killed the woman."

"I am glad to hear you say that, Bessam," Hersey retorted. "I am glad you came to-night. I'll go to him—I'll go now."

Bessam put his great arm around Hersey's thin waist.

"Get that yellow pest of yours to pour the finest, coldest pint you have in the house in, oh anything—a tin can will do, and bring it to me," he cried. "Can't get it too quick to suit me."

The butler brought the wine in an incredibly short time, and it disappeared into Bessam's capacious stomach in equally rapid time. They drove down to the Boonton house at once. Bessam dragged Hersey into the library without ceremony. They found Stratford sitting in a big chair, with his hand held to his mutilated face. Hersey shook him by the hand.

"All that I think we need to discuss, Jim," he said, with more animation in his voice than it had yet shown, "is how to clean up this mess as fast as possible. To that extent, and to that extent only, do you need to go into the facts."

"That's characteristic enough of you," Stratford answered. "The first thing is to send for Cosgrove."

"All right," Bessam put in. "We'll go out to dinner and pick up Cosgrove on the way back. In the

meantime leave a note for Boonton to stay in until we come."

They dined at a quiet café. It was Stratford's first appearance in public since the day of the coroner's inquest. Bessam ordered the dinner. It was a good one. Hersey talked about horse racing. Bessam told every story he ever knew. Stratford listened silently. Bessam drank about half his usual quantity.

"Have to keep a clear head for later in the evening," he said regretfully. "Still, I'll catch up when we get through with business. I'll make Hersey catch up with me, if I can."

After dinner they picked up Cosgrove and returned to Delancey Street. The five men sat for a long time in Boonton's library, going over every phase of the case. They were all agreed that some influence was or had been used against Stratford.

In the end they concluded to wait until the first of the year, when Hunter went into office as district attorney. Bessam resented the delay, but yet felt that the situation was perhaps most easily handled in this way. Cosgrove looked doubtful.

"That fellow Hunter didn't look good to me when Stratford beat him for that cup," he said. "Then there is another reason why I wouldn't be too sure of that chap. You met him through Mr. Bessam's daughter, did you not?" he asked Stratford.

Stratford answered in the affirmative. Hersey

raised his eyebrows. Bessam didn't see any connection. Boonton, if he had any notion in this regard, kept it to himself.

"At any rate, it's about the only thing to do now," Hersey said finally. "Come, Jim, we'll go home. I get tired easily these days."

With characteristic impatience Bessam sent for Hunter the next day and stated the case.

"Stratford is enough of a lawyer to know that it is impossible for me to act until after I get into office," Hunter said.

"I am not a lawyer, and know that myself. What I want from you," Bessam retorted with some warmth, "is the assurance that you will do what is necessary when the time comes."

"You are naturally very much interested, Mr. Bessam," Hunter answered blandly. "But surely you cannot suppose that I am in a position, nor will be, to influence the action of the grand jury. I can only present the evidence as it comes to me. Of course, as you say, this is of such a nature as to make an indictment of Mr. Stratford practically impossible. I will present the case to the grand jury the moment it is possible to do so."

An answer Bessam had to be content with.

Christmas and its succeeding holidays came and went. Hersey did not improve. There was no definite disease manifest, but the man seemed slowly to waste away. Bessam had every specialist in town come to see Hersey. Hersey bore with the pro-

tracted examinations with amused patience. Bessam had an idea that money would delay the dissolution of age. The specialist said very little, a bad sign as a rule. In the end Hersey kicked over the traces.

"Let's get this beastly grand jury business over, and we will go to Europe, Jim," he said, with some of his old finality in his speech. "It will do you good, too, to get away from this atmosphere," he added, as he took note of Stratford's haggard face. He placed his gaunt hand on Stratford's shoulder, a touch of gentleness Stratford had never seen before and which made him look anxiously up into Hersey's thin wasted face.

In the first week in January Stratford's case was presented to the grand jury. The proceedings were of course held in secret. To everyone's utter surprise, an indictment charging Stratford with murder in the first degree was handed down.

Cosgrove appeared at once at the Hersey home. He drove Stratford to court at once. The justice on the bench had the two men shown into his private room.

"There has been no application made for a warrant for your arrest, Mr. Stratford," he said. "I am, however, glad you came to me at once. I regret to say that the charge as made is not aailable one. I must commit you to the Tombs to await trial."

"I understand that," Stratford answered calmly. "That's what I am here for."

The justice made out the necessary documents himself.

"I will send one of my own men down to the prison with you," he said finally. "I fancy Cosgrove will see that you are comfortable."

The men drove to the great prison. Stratford was assigned to a single cell. The warden had a whispered conversation with Cosgrove, whose heavy face had taken on an ominous stolidity. He shook hands with Stratford as he left, but made no comment. When Stratford was alone he threw himself down on the cot in his cell and stared at the ceiling. Soon the prison physician came in. He was a fat cheerful-looking man, with gray hair and kindly blue eyes. He puffed very hard for a few minutes and then felt Stratford's pulse.

"You'll do," he said after a few moments in silence. "I suppose my colleagues would scoff at the idea of a man recognizing guilt by the pulse, but I know I can tell."

Stratford did not answer. The doctor lighted a cigar.

"I'll play you a two-handed game of pinochle for a dollar a game," the doctor said next.

When the warden appeared he found the two men playing cards. The doctor threw the ace of trumps on the little table with unnecessary force.

"Life is only a game," he said laughingly, as the warden stepped to the table.

The warden patted the doctor's broad back. They

had been associated for years in the study of crime and criminals. The doctor managed to violate the prison rules with astonishing success. The warden had intermittent attacks of blindness, of which he was very proud. Incidentally his prison was a model of cleanliness and few left it without a word of thanks for his efforts.

Hersey's fighting instinct rose in him. He actually improved in health. Bessam roared like a mad bull. Cosgrove went about with his deep-set eyes looking somber. Boonton said nothing. Nights found him jabbing his deformed hand into his pillow in impotent rage.

Bessam sent for Hunter.

"Try this case at once," he yelled at Hunter, "or never darken my door again."

"This is impossible," Hunter answered in his usual polite even voice. "The Helmar case is on now. I am trying it myself. As soon as it is finished I will take up the Stratford case. I must do my duty to the county."

The Helmar case was the attraction of the day. A Marie Helmar was on trial for the murder of a man with whom she had had an affair. The case was attracting much attention because of the prominence of the murdered man and, too, because of the great beauty of the prisoner. She had been of the better class of demi-monde and was a familiar figure in the set in which she moved.

The case had been on trial for a week, with little

progress, owing to the fact that a satisfactory jury was obtained only with great difficulty. It was expected that the taking of testimony would begin the next day.

The woman had killed the man in a fit of jealousy, prompted by the knowledge that the man had no further interest in her. The sympathy of the public was, as is usual in these cases, with the prisoner. In addition to this, the case gave Hunter an opportunity to display his peculiar relentlessness in the discharge of his duty, a pose which he had not varied at any time while in the position of assistant district attorney.

When Hunter left Bessam's library he descended to the drawing-room. Katherine greeted him with a wan smile. She had become thin and pale, though the slenderness was becoming enough. She wore a black evening gown and, strange to say, no jewelry. Hunter took a seat opposite her.

"You have arranged to see that Mr. Stratford is released at once?" she asked.

"That is, as I have already told your father, quite impossible," Hunter answered, looking at the floor.

"There must be some way," Katherine plead. "Surely there must be some way. He never killed that woman."

"Why are you so interested?" Hunter asked quickly. He looked inquiringly into Katherine's face. "Surely you cannot be interested in a man

who has done what this one has. Even if it be proven that he did not kill the woman, it will be always a matter or record that he was charged with murder."

Katherine's inherited keenness asserted itself. She felt instinctively that a plea from her would damage Stratford's chances.

"I agree with you," she said evasively. "The man's life is ruined forever, but then I do not believe he killed the girl, and if he did not it seems an unnecessary hardship to make him go through more than he has already."

"Then you are not interested in him yourself?" Hunter asked.

"No more than I have stated."

"Then I am free to speak for myself."

"Oh, not now—with this calamity over us all. Oh, please don't, Mr. Hunter."

She grew very white and for a moment her self-possession left her.

"Very well. I'll wait," Hunter said gently. "But I have loved you from the first time I saw you. It was the thought of you which made me work day and night and day and night again to gain my election. I ask for no answer now," he added quickly, as he saw how disturbed she was. "But I want you to know it. See what my life can offer you. I will go on climbing to the very top. I want you to think of that before you give your answer."

He stepped to her side and kissed her hand.

"Go now, please," she said hastily. "Go now. Give me time to think. I will tell you some other time."

Hunter bowed and left the room.

"That fellow will never stand in my way again," he mumbled, as he strode rapidly down the broad avenue.

Katherine sat still for several minutes.

"So that is it," she muttered finally. "And I never thought of it. It never entered my mind that that was it."

She mounted to her father's library. She found him sitting in his big chair with a decanter of brandy and a syphon of mineral water at his elbow. His face was flushed and the lower eyelids were heavy and sagged down over his cheek bones. His eyes were clear, however, and the hand steady enough as he poured out some of the brandy.

"Mr. Hunter stopped to talk to me just now," she began with the directness she always found the best way to attack a problem with her father. "You have intimated to me that some mysterious force is working against Jim." She stopped for an instant and drew in her breath long and deep. "I need not go into details with you, Dad. I have it. It's Hunter. He is dragging Jim down." She looked almost majestic that moment, in her low black gown and with the haggard expression which made her look like an animal at bay. "I want you to know it, Dad. I envy for once that Fuller woman. For once I

know what men mean when they speak of the primitive Eve." Her quiet indolent dark eyes blazed into luminous activity. "I don't care what Jim has done. Save him, Dad. Save him. Beat this sneak into hell. If I never look at Jim Stratford again as long as I live, don't let that cur harm him any more."

She brought her heavy hand down on the mahogany table at her father's elbow, upsetting the decanter of brandy and splintering the slender glass into nothing.

"So that's the game, is it?" Bessam said, with ominous quiet in his voice. He rose from his chair and took his daughter by the wrist. "Listen to me, Kitty. You know I love you better than anything in the world. Answer me now as woman to man, not as daughter to father. Are you sure—are you perfectly sure that this fellow Hunter is nothing to you?"

"He is nothing to me," came the steady answer.

Bessam released her wrist. It showed the marks of his fingers, dark red streaks on the white skin.

"That's enough," he said. He pressed a button in the door frame. The butler came in. "Get my own car," he ordered. He stepped to the telephone on his writing desk. In a moment he had Hersey on the wire. "I'm coming down at once. Wait," he said, and hung up the receiver. Ten minutes later he walked into Hersey's library.

An hour later Hunter came into the Hersey library. He was a trifle pale, but calm and self-

possessed. Hersey bade him to seat himself, but Hunter declined.

"I am a much occupied man at present," he said. "Your matter must be a very important one to have you summon me in this manner. I am certain that only my personal regard for Mr. Bessam would make me come away from my desk to-night."

"You'll lose that regard damned quick," Bessam broke in, with violence. "Don't throw any bluff with me. Hunter, you are a cur! You know what I mean," he added quickly, as Hunter made a gesture of astonishment. "Now to boil this thing down, I want to say that the Bessam millions, these selfsame millions that I accumulated by the dint of sweat and work, are against you. The Hersey millions"—he indicated Hersey with his thick fat forefinger—"are against you. Have the complaint against Jim Stratford dismissed, or, by God, I'll ruin you! If I should fail, Hersey will ruin you. I'll drag myself into the gutter, but, by God, you'll square this rotten thing!"

Hersey had sat very still in his dark velour chair. He took the cigarette from his lips now to say: "Yes, Hunter, you had best attend to this little matter at once."

Hunter fished a cigarette from his pocket. He was not a coward.

"It will be necessary to conform to certain technical necessities," he answered calmly, though his hand shook a trifle as he ignited the cigarette. "It cannot be done until after the Helmar trial."

"That will do," Hersey answered. "I realize you have to save your face, and it would not hasten things to make a fuss. You may go."

. Hunter passed out without further comment.

The two old men sat very still for a few moments. Hersey puffed his cigarette. Bessam groped in his waistcoat for a cigar.

"Over on that table you'll find one, Bessam," Hersey said.

Bessam lighted his cigar.

"Say, Hersey," he said after a few deep puffs, "have you got a cold pint in the house?"

He got it in about twenty seconds.

CHAPTER XIII

THE Helmar case dragged along. Stratford had been in the Tombs for two weeks. In a way he was not unhappy. He had a feeling that he was expiating something. The fat doctor played cards with him daily or expatiated on the psychology of crime. He was a remarkably versatile man and quoted on minute from Lombroso and the next recited Shakespeare. Stratford told him of his case with more freedom than he had shown with anyone else. The doctor tried to prove a relationship between "emotional insanity" and profound affection. He had a unsatisfactory listener in this regard in Stratford who was, however, too polite to offend the kind gentleman. Incidentally the doctor managed to find an excuse for every crime on the calendar. Everybody loved him for it.

Bessam wanted to bribe every official connected with the prison. He stopped soon, as the result of a polite but firm admonition in this connection from Sullivan, the warden.

Hersey drove to the prison every day. The day after the interview with Hunter, Hersey told Stratford of what had taken place. Stratford made no comment. Cosgrove came in the midst of the interview. He simply nodded his head, but said nothing.

Hunter sent word to Stratford the next day

through one of his assistants that the justice presiding in the Helmar case would entertain a motion to dismiss the complaint as soon as the Helmar trial was over.

"After all," Hersey said, when he was informed of this, "I can't help but admire the fellow's inflexibility. He has not backed down from his position an inch. We will hear more from that gentleman."

At the end of two weeks the Helmar trial drew to a close. The jury brought in a verdict of murder in the second degree, and the presiding judge had asked if there be any reason why sentence should not be pronounced.

It was understood by the prison authorities that the Judge would be at liberty to entertain Stratford's motion that morning.

Graham, the attorney for the defense in the Helmar case, had made a lengthy address which had already occupied the attention of the court for a much longer period of time than had been expected when Stratford entered the court-room, accompanied by a guard. Boonton met him at the door and sat beside him at the end of the long green table reserved for the defense.

Stratford rested his mutilated cheek on his hand and Boonton kept his deformed hand in his coat pocket. Bessam and Hersey stayed away at Stratford's request. Cosgrove sat at one side of the court-room, though he gave no sign of recognition as Stratford came in.

"These are the considerations," Graham was saying, "which I ask your Honor to take into account. I ask for a new trial for the defendant on the grounds already stated and because extrinsic evidence has been admitted here tending to prejudice the defendant in the eyes of the jury. Evidence as to her past mode of life given by persons not competent to offer opinions in this regard. This woman went to the apartment of the deceased to plead for one single gentle word in response to the woman's love she had for the deceased. I ask you to go back in your memory to the defendant's own recital of the facts. The painstaking, laborous examination by her attorney to state everything which happened that night. Not until she had been repeatedly admonished, even by the court itself, that the whole truth was necessary to the proper administration of the justice she herself wanted done, did she consent to vary the so pathetically reiterated statement 'I killed him.' Had I the verbose, powerfully convincing method of diction at my command so forcefully employed by the attorney for the State I would recite here again the testimony to painfully drawn from the defendant's reluctant lips. We of the legal profession are too apt to look at the problem of adjudication of violations of the law from technical viewpoints, with less consideration for the mitigating circumstances the outcome of human emotions. This verdict is manifestly inconsistent with the character of the offense. Picture if you can the scene in the

apartment of the deceased; the woman, cold, wet, fatigued, with her jealous love gnawing at her heart,—drunk, God help her!—pleading with the man who had used her for the gratification of his animal appetites strong, firmly entrenched in his own luxurious environment, showing as the testimony indicates no response to the hunger in this poor woman's soul, casting her off as he would a garment which no longer showed his person off to advantage."

The woman seated beside the speaker raised her head. Six months in the Tombs, awaiting trial, had left their mark. She had thick dark hair, which, parted in the center, fell in two heavy waves over her ears; deep blue eyes shaded by heavy clearly defined eyebrows. At the neck the hair made a strong contrast to remarkably clear, almost perfectly white skin, whose tone was still more enhanced by the dead black gown she wore. As she raised her head she reached a strongly made, singularly symmetrical hand out toward her attorney. She did not turn her head.

"I do not wish you to speak ill of him, Mr. Graham," she said.

The voice was clear. She barely moved her lips, yet the words went to every corner of the somber room.

"You must not interrupt the proceedings of the court, madam," the judge put in. "If you have anything more to say, you will be given an opportunity

to state it later. You have had ample opportunity to give your evidence to the jury ——”

“The prisoner will rise when being addressed by the Court,” the court attendant called from the space beside the jury box. The woman rose. She towered quite over the elderly little man who was defending her. A ray of sunlight came through the window behind the judge’s bench. It fell on her white still face, enhancing an indentation in her cheek.

The press stenographer poised his pencil in the air for an instant. “She looks like the incarnation of expiation,” he said, turning to the artist for the press who sat beside him. The sentence seemed to please him. He let the pencil run rapidly over the paper before him as he jotted it down. The artist smiled.

“If I could put that expression on canvas I would not have to make sketches for newspaper halftones,” he answered quietly.

The prisoner raised her hand to her face. A vagrant wisp of hair had touched her cheek. She tucked it back in place with a deft movement of her fingers.

“You may be seated,” the judge said gently. “The Court does not wish to expose you to unnecessary hardship; however, you will please not interrupt again.”

The prisoner sat down. She still had her eyes fixed ahead, as though searching for something be-

yond the red velour drapery canopied over the judge's head.

The attorney went on: "May I proceed, your Honor?" He did not wait for an answer. "If I understand the provision of the statute the defendant must have been proven beyond a reasonable doubt to have had murder in her mind when she first entered the presence of the deceased. This I have already stated not to have been the case, as clearly shown in the evidence and her own recital of the facts. Facts which, it please your Honor, no testimony has been introduced by my able and efficient, if somewhat strenuous opponent, to render negative. In your charge to the jury, your Honor, you did not clearly define this distinction, and I hold, with due deference to your Honor, that this was an omission on your part."

"You did not ask for this distinction when making your request for charge, though of course I remember making this point clear to the jury," the judge retorted. "The counts upon which you based your request for charge have been carefully gone over by myself, and all have been taken into account. Have you any additional reasons to submit why the verdict should be set aside and the prisoner be given another trial?"

"I have stated all of them, your Honor. I am, however, reluctant to rest my case without one plea to the Court on the score of humanity. Look upon this broken woman, if you please."

He indicated the prisoner with a wave of his hand. He might best not have done that. Far from the broken creature his words would indicate did she appear that moment—with the defiant, well-cut shoulders held erect, the still hands composedly folded on the black skirt, the wide, deep blue eyes looking on into distance, the calm quiet lips apposed without a single line in the adjacent skin.

Graham stopped. Even the thirty-five years of life as a criminal trial lawyer had not made him proof against this. Had his client shed tears he would have used them to wash away justice if he could. Had she been defiant, he would have used this as an argument of evidence of guiltlessness. But this apathy, this total disregard of what was going on about her, the absence of all emotion during even Hunter's scathing summary of the case for the State, disconcerted him, and now, as the prisoner still remained motionless as though cast in metal, he became momentarily rebellious himself, and with a wave of his hand and a deprecatory shrug of his shoulders sat down.

The judge looked at the attorney for the State.

"You wish, of course, to have your opposition to Mr. Graham's motion placed on the record, Mr. Hunter," he said. "I will adjourn court for luncheon if your argument is to be prolonged."

"I will not take up much more of the time of the court," Hunter answered, rising from his seat.

"However, it is almost one o'clock, and as I will ask for sentence at once, it would perhaps be better to let the jury go. They have had a long trying time as it is."

He had given no evidence of Stratford's presence, and now when he finished speaking he bowed over the papers on the table in front of him and became at once absorbed in their perusal.

"Adjourned till two o'clock," the judge ordered. He reached under his silk robe for a cigar he had had in mind for an hour. As the judge stepped from the platform Stratford rose.

"May it please your Honor," he began, "I wish to make my motion for dismissal of the complaint against myself at this time. It will take only a few minutes, sir," he added, seeing a slight frown on the judge's face.

"I feel, Mr. Stratford," the judge answered, "that it would be preferable to consider your motion when this trial is over. I am not subjecting you to any real hardship in doing this. You may return after recess and I will take the matter up."

Stratford bowed.

Warden Sullivan himself stepped up at that moment.

"Come, Mr. Stratford, you can stand one more meal with me," he said laughingly.

Stratford turned toward the door opening to the bridge that led to the prison. Hunter continued to

busy himself with his papers. The court-room was emptying rapidly and quite a crowd of people stagnated at the door.

Stratford hung back. The woman on trial came along at that moment. Her eyes met those of Stratford. He noted that her eyes rested on the livid scar on his cheek. A wave of sympathy, a queer feeling of comradeship, rose in Stratford's heart. The next moment the woman lowered her head and passed on, and crossed the bridge a few feet in front of Stratford. A guard walked beside her, holding the sleeve of her waist between his forefinger and thumb. Stratford watched her disappear into the woman's corridor. He stood quite lost in thought for some moments, until Sullivan touched him on the shoulder. Then he went back to his own cell, where luncheon was served by the warden's servant.

After recess Stratford came back to the court-room. Sullivan had arranged to have a messenger notify him when the argument for imposition of sentence was over, so as to save Stratford the annoyance of sitting in the court-room awaiting the time he would be heard. Stratford had asked, however, to be permitted to return to court at once, a request which Sullivan readily granted, though Stratford did not state that his desire had its birth in a wish to be present when Hunter made his plea for sentence of the Helmar woman. Indeed, he was not quite sure what made him wish to be present, though in his heart the profound pathos in the unfortunate

woman's demeanor, and the awful consequences of her crime, and perhaps the allied emotions which led to his own predicament, were really the determining factors—a condition applicable to all spheres of life when misfortunes meet.

When Stratford entered the court-room Boonton was already seated, though he rose and shook Stratford by the left hand as he approached. The judge had lingered a while past the hour, but came in presently, with his face slightly flushed. The spectators and the attorneys rose as he came in. Hunter remained standing when the others, including the prisoner, had taken their seats. He was a trifle haggard, but was self-possessed. He again showed no sign of recognition when Stratford came in.

"If it please your Honor," he began, in a clear rather high pitched incisive voice, "the defendant was indicted by the grand jury, charged with murder in the first degree. Whatever mitigating circumstances may have attended her action have already been taken cognizance of by the jury when it brought in a verdict of murder in the second degree. This is perhaps not the outcome of the testimony as presented, but no doubt is ascribable to the natural inherent reluctance men have at sending a woman to the electric chair."

He paused for a moment to allow the court stenographer to catch up, who had frowned in his direction in rebellion at Hunter's quick delivery.

"Did it not occur to this woman," he went on,

“when she dragged her besotten body into the murdered man’s home that she was invading an area in which she had no place, a field from which her mode of life had excluded her? Assuming that she had been the temporary mistress of the deceased, allowing for a moment that he had no right to violate the laws of society, it is also proven here, by the statements of the defendant herself, that there was never a misunderstanding as to the relationship between the defendant and the murdered man. Whatever tolerance society shows for this sort of thing, it should not also be asked to condone an added offense because it was the outcome of a moral deviation in which the defendant played as great a part as did the dead man. It never entered the ruthless, revengeful mind of the prisoner that this man was of use to society in a practical sense, if not one of its ornaments in a moral one, and that even when she took his life he was engaged in contributing his part to the sciences and the well being of mankind, a field of usefulness in which he figured to no little extent as the outcome of prolonged application and hard labor. A life’s work interrupted not alone by his own deviation from ritual, but because he was held by the allure of this woman, whose proclivities in this regard have been sufficiently notorious to make a classification of her status an easy matter.

“This stony pose; this stolid demeanor; the dramatic, expressionless countenance she has habitually displayed here in court during all these hours and

days of the trial; sitting beside her attorney doing a Charlotte Corday stunt; affecting a simplicity of demeanor the falsity of which needs for recognition only a brief mental review of the character of her crime, lead us all to the conclusion that all has been assumed to influence the jury in her favor.

"Yes, picture the scene in the murdered man's apartment. I borrow willingly a situation from the learned counsel on the other side whose facetious allusion to my own verbosity he buried deeply enough in the volume of his own. I, too, can see the picture—this vampire, this drunken leech, not satisfied with the havoc she has made in the man's career, totally disregarding the fact that he ended his relationship with her in order to take up the burden of years again and carry it on to a glorious consummation,—refuses to be repelled. No, indeed; she must yet go further and destroy his life that none might have it since she no longer could possess it herself. Your Honor, I will no longer take up the time of the Court. I ask for sentence consistent with the verdict of the jury. It is written that all shall be innocent until found guilty by their peers. This has been done, and the verdict has been impartially rendered in accord with the lights of the defendant's judges."

Graham rose as Hunter sat down.

"I move you, sir," he said, "that the verdict be set aside and a new trial ordered on the grounds stated."

"Motion denied," the judge answered, at the same time reaching over to the edge of his desk for a yellow covered volume which had a slip of paper protruding from its pages. He had only recently been appointed to the bench and did not know the ritual of sentence by heart.

"Take an exception," Graham put in in an undertone. The court stenographer had recorded it while the judge was speaking.

"The prisoner will rise," the court clerk called loudly from his chair in front of the judge's bench.

The prisoner rose. The light from the window fell full on her white, smooth forehead and heavy clearly defined eyebrows. The eyes held steady when the light brightened as an obscuring cloud drove past the sun's rays. The indentation in her cheek seemed to have deepened suddenly. Beyond this the expression of the face did not change.

The judge cleared his throat. "Take the prisoner's pedigree," he ordered.

"What is your full name?" the clerk asked.

"My name is Marie Helmar. I had no right to the name of Garnett. I was divorced in this country," the prisoner answered in the peculiar, low-pitched clearly heard voice she had used when admonishing her attorney not to attack the dead man.

"Marie Helmar, alias Garnett, is the name in the indictment, if your Honor will allow me," Hunter put in, half rising from his chair.

A tall strongly built man in a blue serge suit and broad shoes stepped to the prisoner's side.

"Your Honor," Graham interposed, "the prisoner has not been sworn. I respectfully call attention to the omission."

"Swear the prisoner," the judge said, with a frown.

The clerk stuck his pen behind his ear and administered the oath. He stood up as he mumbled the form. "Do you solemnly swear ——" his words became unintelligible. "So help you God," he finished with in a clearer voice.

"The prisoner bowed. "I do," she answered.

The clerk sat down and dipped his pen into the ink. "Your age?" he asked.

"Thirty-one."

"Occupation?"

The prisoner hesitated. "I have no occupation," she answered in a moment.

The clerk held his pen in the air for a moment and then wrote a word rapidly.

"Married or single?"

"Single. After my divorce I never remarried."

"Where were you born?"

"I am an American. I was born in this country."

"Residence?"

"I have no home."

"Name of friend or relative?"

"I have no friends. I do not know where my family is."

"This is simply for the record, madam," the judge put in. "In case you should be seriously ill or die, the authorities want to know whom to notify."

"I have answered the best I know," the prisoner answered.

"It may be recorded that I am in charge of her affairs," Graham said, rising again. The clerk made the note, and closed the portentous volume into which he made the entries. The prisoner stood very still. Silence more profound than before fell into the court-room. The judge leaned forward. He held the yellow-covered book open in his hand.

"Is there any legal reason why judgment should not be passed upon you?" he asked the prisoner.

"None," came the answer.

"You were indicted for murder in the first degree," the judge began, "for which the penalty is execution. Your trial has been fair and unbiased. Whatever lenient conceptions led the jury to disregard the indictment and find you guilty of murder in the second degree is not for me to offer comment upon. Certain it is that you did kill the deceased, and that in his own home, late at night. I will not review the facts. For those who will hear my words repeated,—for yours is a case of widespread import,—I take this opportunity to call attention to, and indeed sound a warning that, the laws of man are the outcome of the teachings of the Great Redeemer. Had you followed His way you would not now stand before me an offender against society, the

law, and the State. It is written that all sin will be expiated by the sinner. A greater judgment will be passed upon you than that of the law and its servants. Go on, then, and live and let the rest of your life be directed toward a preparation to that end. You, Marie Helmar, alias Garnett,"—here the judge read from the yellow-covered book—"having been regularly tried before this court and a jury under indictment charging you with murder in the first degree, and the jury having found you guilty of murder in the second degree, the sentence of this court is that you be imprisoned in State prison at hard labor for the term of your natural life." The judge laid the book down. "And may the everlasting God lead you His way," he added with a bare huskiness in his voice.

The prisoner did not move. The man with the serge suit and broad shoes touched her on the shoulder. She turned slowly. The man took her by the arm and led her toward the door. A woman in the audience sobbed. The prisoner looked at her with a faint movement of her lips. In the corridor a little girl, the child of one of the court attendants, brushed against the prisoner's skirt. She stopped for an instant and placed her fingers on the child's curly head. The man with the broad shoes tightened his grasp on her arm. "This way, please," he said sharply. The prisoner went on and disappeared across the bridge which led to a grated door.

Stratford watched her go. "The unutterable pity

of it all," he said to Boonton. "The everlasting expiation because God held his hand too long away. Go on, poor child."

Boonton nodded his head mutely.

"I will entertain your motion now, Mr. Stratford," the judge's voice called from the bench.

The spectators had waited after the Helmar woman was sentenced to hear Stratford address the court. Two sensations in one day were unusual, even in New York City. A few of the audience left, however, and Hunter, with his staff who were associated with him in the case, filed out with them. He still disregarded Stratford's presence.

"I move you, sir," Stratford began, omitting the preliminary "If it please your Honor." He had a feeling in his innermost self that the judge was his antagonist, which was erroneous enough, yet is almost uncontrollable in persons who face the arbiter of a legal question in which they are vitally interested, and accounts no doubt for the tone of irritation and resentment attorneys have at times when addressing the court. He stood now, resting his hand on the green baize table before him with his mutilated face turned toward the darker side of the room. He hesitated a moment and began again.

"If it please your Honor, I move you, sir, that the indictment against myself be dismissed on the ground that the evidence submitted by the State does not justify my being tried on the charge made."

"The matter has been quite thoroughly gone into,

Mr. Stratford," the judge interrupted. "There is no need for you to humiliate yourself any further. I have gone carefully over the record myself. The time of the court need not be further taken up. I understand," the judge asked, turning to a dapper little man standing near Stratford, "that the State will not oppose the motion."

"I have been instructed by the district attorney to inform you that the motion will not be opposed," the young man answered.

He handed a number of papers tied with a red ribbon to the clerk of the court, who laid them on the desk in front of the judge's seat.

"Motion granted," the judge said quickly. "You are discharged from custody, Mr. Stratford. Permit me to extend to you my good wishes. I fancy you are aware of the fact that your rights as a citizen are in no way abrogated by your trouble. It is to be regretted that the charge of murder is not a bailable one. I feel too that the district attorney's office was very prompt in its action in your case."

Stratford bowed, though he made no answer. A murmur of applause rippled through the court-room as he turned toward the door. The court officer restored order immediately by a few sharp blows with a rattan against the jury box.

Stratford went back to the prison office. The guard who had sat beside him in court held his overcoat as he slipped into it. Sullivan and the prison physician came in to say good-by.

"Good-by," Sullivan said kindly. "Play your game out. There is plenty of time to win."

The gray-headed portly doctor shook him warmly by the hand. "I will miss our games of cards," he said. "But, as Mr. Sullivan says, you have a bigger game than that to play now. God bless you."

"Thank you for your kindness to me, Sullivan," Stratford answered back. He passed out into the brilliant sunlight, which heightened the livid red of his scar. At the door he met Boonton, who had his deformed hand in his pocket. Stratford slipped his arm inside of Boonton's and drove home to the great house on Madison Avenue.

Hersey and Stratford sailed for Genoa a few days later. Hersey's health began to fail again. Stratford's general health had strangely improved in the two weeks he was in prison, a condition which is frequently observed by prison officials, who ascribe it to the prison régime, and do not take into account the peculiar mental repose attendant upon the thought by which a deviation from ritual is followed when it is paid for. Much has been written about this peculiar phenomenon, and much more has been said of the apparent indifference of persons about to be executed; yet few take into account this primitive impulse inherent in most people, to wipe out a crime by paying its penalty.

Cosgrove went back to his ginmill and Boonton returned to his work in his Ghetto. Then came word from Europe.

Stratford wrote from Nice that Hersey was failing fast. In the end came a cablegram stating that Hersey was dead. Soon Boonton received a letter from Stratford, which had a note of tenderness in it he had never known in the writer before.

He went out, [Stratford wrote] as he had lived—defiantly facing the inevitable. He was very patient through it all. I never left him for days. It seemed to me as though here, in this last devotion, I had found a field for the exercise of what you and your life taught me, though I did not heed the lesson as you gave it. He wanted to come here to the south of France in the end. He sat at the window for hours watching a lot of peasant children playing in an old boat which was beached under his very window. He never alluded, however, to his own childless life.

He called me to his bed just before he died. I sat beside him for some time, watching his poor, sunken face. His eyes were closed and I thought him asleep. Spring was already merging into summer, and the wind from the Mediterranean was warm with the summer sun. Soon he opened his eyes. "I am not asleep, Jim," he said, in his even clear voice. "I will get a long rest soon." He lay quite still for some time. "Turn your face toward the light, Jim," he said suddenly. "You will carry that scar to your grave. Most of us have scars. They are the result of the contest of life, only most of us have them hidden. Carry yours as best you know." He ceased speaking and stared out on the glittering water for a long time. His face was strangely calm. "You will find my affairs in proper shape," he began again. "Do not go back when I am dead. Stay in Europe for a time. Do not face unnecessary hardship. Time is a great healer. I would prefer you to stay longer. I would like Boonton to see to those things which are necessary when death comes. I like the fellow. Bessam is not as strong as he looks, the dear old drunken thing." He smiled that old indefinable smile when he said it. "My breath

comes a bit hard." He closed his eyes after that and never opened them again. I send him home to you, Boonton. Go and see his attorney—you will remember you met him at dinner that night we saw Myra Russak. He will carry out your wishes. I will stay here for a time. That's about all.

STRATFORD.

ST. PHARAMOND, June 12, 19...

Stratford wandered the Continent. Two months after Hersey's death he received a letter from Boonton, and another from Katherine Bessam. He had made his headquarters in Paris, where he lived in a little apartment on the Champs Elysée, near the Arc de Triumphe.

Everything has been done as you wished [Boonton wrote]. The Hersey affairs are large. You had best come back. Bessam, your co-executor, fumes at your absence. He begins to rebel at the weight of the responsibility imposed upon him. Cosgrove often comes to see me. He always asks for you. At times he meets Bessam here. A strange friendship has sprung up between these queer men. Hunter is making a tremendous hit in his office. He is already regarded as the logical candidate for Governor, though this is yet three years off. There is another reason why I want you to come back. I have lost my grip here. There are too many painful associations in this old house. I have been appointed chaplain at the Auburn State Prison. I know you will frown when you read this. It smacks of a tendency toward religious segregation, as though going into a monastery and wearing a hairy cloak with a hood and shaving my scalp. It is not as bad as that, however. Cosgrove obtained the appointment for me. Our friend Sullivan and his fat doctor helped quite some too. I will not go on duty at Auburn until the fall, so if you do not feel that you wish to come I will help Bessam all I can until then. But try to come. I want much to see you again.

BOONTON.

Katherine's letter was brief. "Dad has not been himself since Ralph Hersey's death," she wrote. "He constantly asks why you don't come back. Come back, Jim. We all want you here. None of us feel harshly toward you. I do not know that it makes any difference to you, but I myself have only gentleness and sorrow in my heart, you poor unfortunate boy."

It was the first note of feminine tenderness Stratford had had come into his life for a long time. He let the letter slip to the floor. Presently he stepped to the mirror over the mantel in his little sitting-room. His hair was quite gray. The scar on his face stood out like a streak of red clay on a snow-peaked mountain top.

"I'll go back, anyway," he said half aloud.

Suddenly a new hope found birth within him. He rang the bell leading to the servants' quarters.

"Get me passage on the first steamer that leaves Cherbourg," he ordered when his man came in.

CHAPTER XIV

BESSAM was cruising off the coast of Nova Scotia when he was informed that Stratford was coming home. A wireless message from Boonton picked him up off Sable Island. There had been some difficulty in getting his electric accord, though the operator at Cape Race had manipulated his coil with praiseworthy persistence for three mortal days when he was not tied up with someone else. When he located the *Cosette* he said disagreeable things to Bessam's operator. Dots and dashes fizzed in the little Marconi house astern of the bridge in a manner which made one glad that wireless printing was not yet *en vogue*.

The way the stokers shoveled coal ten minutes after Bessam received the message was a sight for the gods. Everyone else on board shoveled coal or oiled a bearing. Bessam's valet projected oil from a hand "squirt gun" on the shaft bearings. When he helped Bessam on with his dinner coat that evening he smudged the collar with oil. Bessam gave him a five-dollar bill when the explanation was forthcoming.

The engineer disconnected the dynamos and the

ice machine to save steam. He watched the pressure gauge like a jealous woman watches her rival at a dance where there is a conservatory available. The decks were stripped of awnings and other things which might resist the air. In two hours the *Cosette* was turning up twenty-four knots. Bessam went about with a stop watch in his hand and counted the revolutions of the engine. When they dropped below eighty-four he swore at the engineer. The engineer was a silent man. In the end he called Bessam's attention to the fact that the safety valve was "blowing off" most of the time.

"Why in hell can't you wire it down?" Bessam shrieked. A request that made the patient engine driver reply: "I'd do that if I was as crazy as the owner of this boat, but I have a wife and three children ashore."

Bessam liked the reply. He gave the engineer a fat cigar. Then he descended into the stoke-hole and swore great oaths at a feeder who happened to have a clinker in his fire. The man was covered with coal dust and sweat. He raked the clinker out with a sheepish look on his grimy face. The rest of the fire was the color of molten bronze, both top and bottom. The poor devil had nursed that fire like a mother nurses her firstborn. He told Bessam so, as he kicked the clinker aside with his foot. Bessam apologized and sent the man a pint of vintage champagne.

The *Cosette* rounded the Battery at the end of

Manhattan Island and slid up the Hudson River as Stratford's ocean hound picked her pilot up at the lightship. The captain had not been off the bridge since Boonton's message came aboard. In addition to this, the *Cosette* reversed every course signal blown for her, until the river pilots must have concluded she was under command of a lunatic. When her anchor went over the bow the river police sergeant had to be placated to save Bessam's captain from jail.

Bessam sent Katherine home in a taximeter and violated the speed ordinance with his own car to get to the Lloyd dock. The *Kronprinz* was being slid into her berth when he arrived. Boonton and Cosgrove were already there. When Bessam saw Stratford's gray hair and the livid scar he swore some more. He explained his profanity on the ground that he had a pain in his big toe and would have to stop his rum for a while. He kept saying "Poor devil, poor devil!" under his breath. Stratford actually sympathized with him. He thanked him several times for coming to meet him when his foot hurt him so bad. Bessam felt proud of his skilful deceit, and limped very artistically for a few moments.

Cosgrove had an unlighted cigar in his mouth. When he saw Stratford he inadvertently bit the end off and swallowed it. Boonton said nothing. He slid his deformed hand under Stratford's arm and led him toward the shore end of the pier. The

quartette mounted into Bessam's car and drove to the Hersey home. With characteristic thoughtfulness the house was made ready by Boonton, who had spent many hours ordering the servants about.

Bessam led the way into the library. Onshi appeared from some mysterious corner. He had Bessam's cold bottle in his hand. A quick order equally quickly executed multiplied the bottle. Bessam was drunk in twenty minutes. He forgot about his simulated gout. He also forgot to limp.

Cosgrove was a close second in engulfing the wine. He hadn't been drunk for twenty years. He assured Bessam that he was proud of it. Not that he hadn't been drunk for twenty years, but because he was drunk now. He said this three times in succession. Bessam told him to shut up, and howled for another bottle of wine.

Boonton left quietly, saying he'd come back next morning.

Bessam and Cosgrove, later, mounted into the car at the door. Bessam had a little difficulty climbing in. They drove into the country. Neither of them said a word until the car pulled up at the Country Club. The strangely mated pair sat down under a tree on the lawn.

"Bessam," Cosgrove said at last, "that would drive an angel to drink, and God knows I'm not an angel."

"Have another drink, Cosgrove," Bessam said.

"No. Nor you, either. We are a pair of fools. Come, Bessam, let's go home."

"I guess you're right, old sport."

Bessam drove Cosgrove to his ginmill, then he went to his granite pile.

Winter crowded autumn into history. Boonton went to his post at Auburn. The little house on Delancey Street was closed and soon took on the garb of its neighbors. Stratford busied himself with Hershey's interests. He sold the string of horses. Hershey's saddle mare he kept for his own use. He rode her every morning before breakfast. It was the only exercise he had, for he never went out in daylight except in a closed car. Soon after his return he wrote Katherine, thanking her for the note she sent to him in Paris.

Like a woman, she waited to observe what he would do. When she realized that he wished to be left alone she made no effort to induce him to come to see her.

Bessam and Cosgrove dined with Stratford once a week. At first Bessam tried to force him to take up life as before. Soon he realized that he was only causing more pain. Then he stopped trying.

Early in the spring Boonton came to the city, staying with Stratford. He arrived quite late at night. The next day broke with a flood of sunshine. After breakfast the two men sat in the library, Boonton in a large arm-chair at the window. He rested his deformed hand on the window sill. The morning sunlight fell on the distorted fingers and great thickened wrist. Stratford sat in the shadow

of a heavy curtain at the opposite window. The men were good enough friends to afford the luxury of silence.

"Carle," Stratford said suddenly, "do you think that your hand is responsible for your mode of living?"

"I think so." Boonton answered. "I do not grow more tolerant of it as time goes on. It is as awful to me now as it was the first time I saw my mother's tears fall on it. Yet, too, I fancy I would have been of less use in the world had I been as other men, though indeed I have accomplished little enough."

"Your life should have been an inspiration to me," Stratford said slowly. "I've been a coward. Come, we will go out into the sun."

Boonton went each day with Stratford until his little vacation was over. At first Stratford winced when people stared at his face. After that, he showed no sign of sensitiveness, though he developed an expression of countenance and a peculiar carriage of the head seen in persons who are blind.

Late one beautiful June day he walked along Riverside. The historic driveway was quite deserted. Three hot days had been followed by a cool breeze from the west. The sun dipped toward the edge of the Palisades. The wind died down. Stratford stopped to watch a launch make the companion-way at the side of a great battle-ship lying at anchor on the smooth tide. Two men came over the side and boarded the launch. The mechanic fiddled

with the engine. The bowman had already cast off. The launch drifted almost afoul a gig moored astern. The bowman fended off with a hook. That moment the "put! put!" of the gasoline motor came over the water and the launch gathered way. Stratford smiled and started on his return. As he turned he came face to face with Katherine Bessam.

He lifted his hat with his left hand, concealing for an instant the left side of his face. Katherine held out her hand. She was much changed. She wore a simple, dark walking gown of some shiny material and a small, rather severe-looking hat. Her gloves were black and her shoes covered with a thin layer of dust. She had grown quite thin, and the somber coloring of her attire, together with the white skin and light brown hair, made her appear almost frail. For a few moments neither spoke.

"You have been in town these hot days?" Stratford said at last.

"I have wondered many, many times," Katherine answered, with the peculiar smile a woman can always offer under all conditions, "what would happen the first time I saw you. And now when it has come we are commonplace enough to talk of the weather."

They both laughed, though there was not much gaiety in either of their voices.

"That is the first laugh for many months," Stratford said, becoming grave again.

"Cosgrove told me that the laughter had gone out of your voice, Jim."

She became very grave herself. They lapsed into silence. Katherine leaned over the stone retaining wall running beside the road. Stratford, too, faced the river. He stood with his left side toward her. The sun had sunk behind the great stone western river bank. The day died a peaceful death. Twilight crept in. They stood thus for a long time in silence.

"I greet it every day with a feeling of thankfulness, he began. "Every day the sun goes down I am thankful that darkness comes. Every deepening shadow I welcome, and at times I wish daylight would never be again."

He placed his hand on his mutilated face. A long slender cloud quite high in the western sky caught the rays of the receding sun. It spread a faint pinkish haze into the air, as though showing the way to invading night.

She turned toward him, put her hand on his neck, pulled his head down and kissed his marred cheek.

"I would give much to make a perpetual twilight for you," she whispered, with her lips close to his ear. "I would need no darkness to make me love you more. I could do that with all the sunshine in the world on your face." She stepped back from him now and looked him straight in the eyes. "Terrible as this is to you, Jim," she went on, "awful as the first thought was to me that another had what I had felt belonged to me, I am not sorry. You will need me now. I am selfish enough to be glad of that.

Whenever you feel that you want twilight, you can find it with me, for what you will be to me will make me see you unmarred, and that will make you feel so too."

"It is impossible that you ——" Stratford broke in.

"Oh, I know it's unwomanly. I know what most women would think of me. But I don't care, Jim. You were much to me before. But never what you will be to me now. Your misfortune and your affliction has made the mother and the woman rise in me, and together they will hold you always. I have waited for a long time to tell you this. At times I hoped you would come to me. Then I knew that you never would. Oh, if men only knew, if men only knew a woman's heart!"

Her voice broke at last. She gave one deep, long sigh. Stratford's arm went about her and he bent down to kiss away her tears.

Stratford and Katherine were married at once. Bessam went with them on the *Cosette*. Katherine begged Cosgrove to go with them. Bessam plead, too, with the sturdy politician. He only shook his gray head.

"I know my limitations," he said. "I know my field of usefulness best. Leave me with it."

They did not come back for a year. When they returned Bessam opened his Newport home. The following autumn Stratford sold the Hersey home

and lived with Bessam. As Hersey predicted, time proved a "great healer." Katherine gradually took up her own little set. Bessam and Stratford busied themselves with the management of their respective interests.

One day early in October Boonton came down from his prison home. After dinner Stratford took him to his own den for a chat. Boonton was quite unchanged, except perhaps his face was a trifle lined with the heavy chin more manifest. As usually obtains with men who have faced much together, they soon lapsed into luxurious silence. Boonton watched Stratford for some time. He noted with satisfaction that his friend did not take his seat with the right side of his face toward the light.

"You remember the Helmar woman," Boonton began suddenly. "She was sentenced that day you were discharged."

"Indeed I remmember her very well," Stratford answered. "Poor woman!"

"I wish to speak of her to some length," Boonton went on. He rarely introduced a subject of interest to himself without a preliminary apology. "As you know, she was sentenced for life. The usual appeal was made and denied by the higher courts. I have gone into the case very thoroughly. It seems that there is really no legal reason why her case should be reopened and a new trial ordered. Her attorney, the man named Graham whom you saw in court that day, assures me that nothing can be done along these

lines. The woman has been under my observation for some time. I feel that her crime was the outcome of emotions which are in all of us. She is not a common criminal. Soon after her confinement she was detailed as a helper in the prison hospital. I see her frequently, for, as you can imagine, my duty takes me there very often. Graham tells me that there is only one possibility, and that is to obtain her pardon from the Governor of the State. I am working on that now and I want your help."

He stopped speaking and looked anxiously at Stratford, who had listened with close attention.

"I am of course very glad to do what I can," Stratford replied after a few thoughtful moments. "But I am at a loss to know how."

"Well, you are an attorney; you are familiar with ways and means, and you have the time to devote to the effort. Again, your friends are very influential. I wish you would try, Jim."

The pleading intonation in Boonton's voice would have made anyone want to try, and Stratford willingly offered his services.

"Suppose you do this," Boonton proceeded. "I will turn the papers in the case over to you to-night. I have them in my bag. You can look them over at your convenience, and at the end of a week or so run up and have a talk with the woman herself. I can arrange this very easily."

"Do you realize," Stratford answered somewhat irrelevantly, "that this is the first thing you have

ever asked me to do. And even now it is not something for yourself."

"Anything that is done in a good cause is done for me," was the characteristic answer.

A week later Stratford drove up to the warden's office at the great prison. Boonton met him at the door.

"I could not get down to the railroad station," he explained. "There was a little matter which kept me here. A dying woman who has been here for a long time sent for me just as I was about to go to meet you. I hope you have not been inconvenienced," he added quickly, seeing Stratford's annoyed expression. "Don't be angry, Stratford. After all, what is driving in a hack for a few minutes? Maybe my prayer did something for her."

"Perhaps it did," Stratford answered as he passed his hand over his left cheek. "I fancy no prayer of mine would help anyone." His annoyance was gone at once. "I will never learn to remember that the world was not made for me alone."

Boonton presented Stratford to the warden, a tall, slender, gray-haired man with a composed, keen, but not unkindly face. He had been in charge of the prison for many years.

"You have come to see the Helmar woman," he said as he shook hands with Stratford. "I will send for her, and you can speak with her here." Then to a uniformed attendant. "Take the gentleman's bag." He turned toward his office.

"That is not necessary," Boonton interposed quickly. "I know where she is at this moment, and I will take Mr. Stratford to her, with your permission."

"As you wish, Mr. Boonton," the warden answered, with a smile. "You know, Mr. Stratford, our friend Boonton usually gets what he wants here. See you later."

The tall figure disappeared into a chamber immediately beside the entrance hall.

Boonton led Stratford down a long corridor and out into a courtyard beyond. The day had been quite warm, but now as the sun went down a chill crept into the air. Stratford buttoned his coat about his neck. A faint mist rose from the ground. Stratford paused for a moment. Boonton looked inquiringly into his face.

"I have a queer feeling," Stratford said, "as though I were on the sea. See how rapidly the fog thickens. It is obliterating everything about us. Once, just after Hersey died, I was in a fog like this, on the English Channel. The captain lunged his turbine through the water at full speed. I leaned over the rail at the port bow. Then we stopped. I had not seen nor heard anything. Some sixth sense had made the skipper stop his craft. Suddenly just over our bow a great ship loomed up through the fog. In an instant it was done. A solitary gull poised for a moment close by where I stood. It dove to the water, rose again, and winged on

through the fog. Never before did I feel as I did then the pain of isolation."

"This is a strange note in you, Jim," Boonton answered. "I know the way here in the dark. Come, I will lead you."

He slipped his deformed hand into Stratford's. In a moment they were at the entrance to the hospital building. A guard approached with a lantern; in an instant he closed the electric current at a switch near the door-frame. A yellow patch of light fell on the cement-covered pathway. The guard threw the bolts back and opened a heavy iron door. His hand slipped on the knob and the door clashed heavily against the stone wall of the building.

"That's our fundamental note here," Boonton said, with a faint smile. "It's a bit harsh, isn't it?"

Stratford nodded his head. The men went down a long hallway and up in a lift to the top of the building. The odor of disinfectants permeated the air. A woman in a white gown and a cap set on beautiful gray hair stepped up as the men emerged from the lift.

"Where is Miss Helmar?" Boonton asked her.

"In the operating room, sir. The doctors have finished."

She led the way into a large white room glaringly illuminated by a cluster of electric lights suspended under powerful reflectors.

A woman in the garb of a convict was kneeling on the floor. She had a pail of water beside her and

wiped blood stains from the tiled floor with a rag. Her head was bent forward and her thick dark hair fell over her ears. She did not look up when the men came in. The rag seemed quite saturated at this moment, and she raised her shoulders to sop it into the pail. The waist of her gown was open at the neck, revealing a white round throat and smooth neck. She sopped the rag up and down in the slowly discoloring water. Then she lifted the rag and slowly wrung it out. Faintly discolored water oozed between her fingers. A tiny pinkish stream streaked the bare forearm. She kept her eyes on the floor and now turned slightly and proceeded to wipe the adjacent space with the rag.

"Here is some one to see you, Helmar," the woman with the white gown said. "You may stop work for a moment."

The woman got up. She rose without placing her hand on the pail, standing quite erect before she raised her eyes. She kept the rag in her hand, from which a small stream of now somewhat darker water ran to the floor. Soon it dripped at increased intervals. A lock of hair fell over her eyes. She pushed it up with her forearm and threw her head back. One rebellious wisp refused to go back into place. She blew her breath at it, but it clung to the sweat on her forehead. She left it undisturbed.

"This is Mr. Stratford," Boonton said. "He is interesting himself in your behalf. He wishes to ask you some questions about yourself, so that he

will be prepared to formulate properly the petition we are getting ready for your pardon."

She bowed slightly to Stratford, who held out his hand. She did not take it. That moment her eyes rested on his scarred cheek. A momentary gleam of recognition flashed into her eyes. The next instant she dropped them again.

"I do not wish to be pardoned," she said in the peculiar toneless voice of the convict. "I have no desire to leave here. I am quite content. It would mean nothing to me to go out into the world again. Thank you very much, sir, for your kindness."

She inclined her head slightly toward Stratford, but did not look up. The little pool of darkened water on the tiled floor reached her foot and she moved the square toed prison shoe away from it.

"You will feel differently about it, perhaps, after a time," Boonton said in his quiet gentle voice. "It will take a long time, at best, to get a hearing in your case, and maybe if we should be successful you would not object any more."

"Perhaps you are right, Mr. Boonton," she answered, with her eyes still on the pool of darkened water. "But you see there is nothing to tell this gentleman. There is nothing in my life that would make them think better of me. Please don't feel bad. I thank you very much. But I'd rather not go over it all again. It's no use."

The rag had stopped dripping and she dropped it back into the pail at her side.

"Very well," Boonton answered gently. "We will have to try without your help. But surely there must be something in your life that would be proper to submit to the Governor?"

"There is nothing. Nothing at all."

She kneeled down again and sopped the rag up and down in the water. The wisp of hair seemed to be in her way and she tucked it back into place. Her face grew suddenly pale as she lifted her head.

"You are faint," Boonton said quickly. "Has your arm been dressed to-day?"

"Oh, yes, sir. Thank you."

Stratford noticed that the right sleeve of her waist was rolled up and the left only turned back at the wrist. The men turned away. Stratford bade the woman "Good-by." She did not answer. He turned back at the door. She was wiping away industriously.

"Has she been injured?" Stratford asked as the men emerged into the courtyard. The fog had quite disappeared and the sky was studded with myriads of stars.

"No," Boonton answered slowly. "There is a woman in the hospital, a convict who worked in the laundry. A washboiler was upset on her legs by another convict. She was horribly scalded. The doctors decided to use skin grafts. Miss Helmar gave up a number of grafts. They took them from her left forearm. The doctors reported her fit for duty, though her wounds have not quite healed. The

doctors here have peculiar standards. However, I suppose they know their business."

"I'm glad you told me," Stratford answered. "I'll put that into the petition. Tell me, is she what they call a trusty?"

"Oh, yes. Her record here is good. She was detailed to hospital work for good behavior. It is regarded as one of the distinctions of this environment to work in the hospital."

"Send me all these facts," Stratford said. "I'll add them to the petition and go ahead the best I can."

They dined with the warden in a comfortably furnished room. Dinner was served by a convict waitress who was serving a ten years' sentence for receiving stolen goods. After dinner Stratford started back to Bessam's granite pile. Boonton played chess with the warden.

The next day Stratford called on Graham, who had defended Miss Helmar during her trial. Graham did not give him much hope. One thing he did. He informed Stratford of his client's affairs. He was glad to have Stratford take up the matter, and asked him to take charge of the prisoner's financial affairs. He was getting old, he explained, and glad to be relieved of unnecessary labor.


This Stratford was glad to do. He made several trips to Auburn in order to straighten things out for his client, and each time made an effort to induce her to aid in formulating the petition for pardon, with no

success, however. Time wore on. At last at the end of a year the Governor of the State took the matter up. He sent for Stratford.

"I have gone over the Helmar case," he said. "As you know, I have not pardoned any criminal during my office as Chief Executive of our State. I have never said in as many words that I never would, but I will say to you, since there has been so much pressure brought on me in this connection, that I have the notion that our system of justice should not be tampered with. Generosity is one thing, the official action of an executive is another. Again, there are absolutely no reasons for pardoning this woman. The plea of her sacrificing labor since her incarceration has nothing to do with the crime for which she was placed in custody. Last, but not least, I have only a few months to serve. I would not indulge in a radical departure from an established position so late. Perhaps my successor will be amenable to your plea. I hope for your sake he will be. There," he added, "that is a long speech at the end of a day's labor. I will be glad to have you join me in a cold drink, if you will?"

Stratford accepted the invitation. The Governor talked about a new motor car he had had sent over from France. Then he excused himself, and Stratford made his adieus.

The election for the governorship was only a few weeks off. As had been expected, Hunter was nomi-



nated for the office by the Republican party. The Democratic nominee was only a figure-head. No one expected other than a clean sweep by Hunter. This proved true enough, and Hunter carried the State as he had the county of New York.

Stratford regarded Hunter's election as fatal to the Helmar case. Cosgrove thought so, too, but advised "making a stab at it, anyway," as he put it.

"Hunter sent the poor devil of a woman up. I think you had better get the woman to take an interest in her own case," he went on. "Human nature is a queer thing. There may be a latent generosity in that cold-blooded dog. I know I always felt kindly toward a fellow after I beat him in the ring. He may feel like that if the woman makes a plea herself."

Stratford went back to Auburn. This time he took Katherine with him. When they arrived Katherine suggested that she be permitted to talk to the woman. She had said nothing about it until they arrived at the prison. This time Boonton met the pair at the station. Stratford sat with the driver and Boonton sat beside Katherine in the rear seat of Boonton's little motor, his one luxury. He was glad to see Katherine.

She asked him about the woman and he told her of some of the things she had done in the somber prison hospital. His voice was barely audible above the chug of the motor and he looked steadily ahead

as he spoke. Katherine watched his thin strong face as he spoke. Stratford jumped out at the prison door to help Katherine out.

"I would be glad, oh, very glad, if something could be done for her," Boonton said almost in a whisper as she stepped out. An expression stole into Katherine's eyes when he said it as is at times seen in a woman's face when she sees another woman carrying a child in her arms who has a steel brace on its leg.

The men waited in the warden's office. Katherine came back in half an hour. Her eyes were very red.

"She has agreed to help what little she can," Katherine said, with the echo of a sob in her voice. "We thought a letter direct from her, asking for mercy, would be best. I have the letter here."

She handed it to her husband. It was sealed. Stratford fumbled the letter in his fingers in an embarrassed sort of a way.

"I wonder if I had better see her?" he asked, looking at his wife.

"No, Jim. I think you had better not to-day."

What those two women said to each other behind the gray prison walls is probably recorded in heaven. No one asked about it. The petition was held up at the executive office for a year. In vain did Bes-sam's political friends hammer at it.

In the end the petition was returned. "Not Granted."

CHAPTER XV

HUNTER entered upon the second year of his term of office in a blaze of glory. Already he was regarded as the logical candidate for the Presidential chair. His political career was without blemish. He had, of course, failed to effect all the reforms he had promised during his campaign. Though even in this he had made no absolute pledges, but simply promised to use every effort he was capable of to effect a correction of existing evils, an attitude which won him many supporters who otherwise would have regarded him as a bombastic *poseur*. The excise question and the great problem of "graft" he had attacked with vigor, if with only moderate success. His manifest earnestness, his disregard for all political affiliations, together with a steadfast refusal to consider the demands of the leaders of the party that had been associated with measures of doubtful utility and perhaps honesty, won him the admiration of the people; and indeed it would have been quite possible to elect him to office irrespective of party affiliations.

Naturally he had made many enemies in the organization which nominated him. During his term of office as district attorney his efforts found ready

support from the political leaders of his own party because his attacks were directed against a rival organization. Now, however, as chief executive of the State, where his own party believed they had a right to be considered in the making of appointments, or in the award of contracts for government work, when he still maintained an attitude of strict impartiality and independence, the men began to rebel.

He had several stormy interviews with the chairman of the State organization, but remained firm.

In the fall of the second year at Albany he thrust his pet legislative measure before the public. One of his firmly implanted convictions, and one he had frequently exploited at public dinners and when addressing meetings of citizens, was that gambling and horse racing were responsible for more than half the crimes committed against the State. He supported his view with the argument that he had, as district attorney of the great county of New York, been in a position to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion in this connection.

No doubt he was right. Even his political enemies admitted this. However, the fact that a solution of the problem had eluded the efforts of his predecessors, and, more than that, the fact that so many interests were allied with the so called "sporting element" in the State, especially in New York City, made any drastic measures a dangerous proposition even to one who was so manifestly a respected offi-

cer of the State, and one whose honesty of purpose had never been questioned. Nevertheless the bill prohibiting horse racing and gambling of any kind was presented in the lower house early in November, and was passed by a substantial majority.

In the Senate the conditions were different. While Hunter had a majority of the senators at his disposition in the sense that members of his own party outnumbered those of the opposition, a number of his own men flatly refused to vote for the measure. Hunter argued, plead, and threatened, with no avail.

The newspapers were divided on the question. All of them agreed that theoretically the measure was correct and proper enough, but practically it was inadvisable and would lead to unnecessary complications which were likely to be very far-reaching. Some of the papers attacked the Governor on the theory that he was a man of education and experience, and quite aware of the utter impossibility of enforcing a measure of this kind, and charged him with being actuated by a desire to pose beyond his measure. Hunter's staunchest friends advised him to withdraw the bill. This he refused to do.

He convened a caucus of the men of his party. At the end of twelve hours' fighting like a demon the conditions were as follows: Of the fifty-four senators, thirty-four were Republican and twenty Democrats. The Democratic senators were all irrevocably opposed to the measure, partially on the ground that it was inadvisable, but mainly because

they saw in the defeat of the bill an opportunity to injure the opposing party. Of the thirty-four Republican senators, all of whom were present at the caucus, ten were at first strongly opposed to Hunter. At the end of the twelve hours four of these agreed to vote for the bill; the other six remained unmoved. The last man to capitulate was a senator from Erie County. His vote gave Hunter the meager majority of one. The Erie County senator was a short, stockily-built man in the early forties, and had an alcoholic complexion.

It was decided to vote on the measure the next day. Hunter was afraid to let the matter rest longer, for fear of a change of view in one or more of his men. He did not sleep much that night, but the next morning found him in his chambers calm, resolute, and as unshaken as ever.

When the Senate convened every seat was filled except that of the Senator from Erie. The debate opened with a lengthy argument from the Senator from Saratoga, a tall, heavily-built man with a bald head and clean-shaven face. He talked like a phonograph. No one paid any attention to what he said. The Senator from Saratoga held the floor until noon. In the meantime the town was searched for the man from Erie. He had mysteriously disappeared.

During recess the Republican Senators were instructed to keep up the debate until the man was found. At three o'clock he was not yet located. The

Senator from Cayuga succeeded the Senator from Rensselaer.

Hunter had remained in his executive chamber all day. At six o'clock he began to show evidence of apprehension. He had not changed much in the five years since he sent Marie Helmar to prison for life. His face was perhaps a little rounder and the thick red hair showed patches of gray at the temples. Beyond this, time had left no discernible marks. He walked the floor of his executive chamber now with rapid steps. He was quite alone in the heavily furnished chamber, though his secretary was in the adjoining room. Every few minutes a messenger from the president of the Senate came in bringing a penciled slip of paper, which each time read "not yet." Each time Hunter sent word back to continue the debate.

The entire police force of Albany was busily engaged in searching for the absent Senator. He had been last seen at midnight after the caucus adjourned walking down State Street. He was alone, and had refused to join a few of his fellow Senators at the Ten Eyck Hotel for a drink. He was sulky, and had irritably declared that the caucus was a good thing to sleep on. From that moment on all trace of him had disappeared. Every resort, good, bad, and indifferent had been visited by the police, with no result. Hunter's secretary was in continuous communication with the chief of police. At intervals he

opened the door leading to the executive chamber and announced the continued failure to locate the man. At seven o'clock he brought in a card. Hunter took it with a frown.

"You know I will not see anyone to-night," he said impatiently. Almost automatically he looked at the card. It read "John Cosgrove." "Stop!" he called to the secretary, who had already turned toward the door.

Hunter stepped to the window and drew aside the curtain. He stood thus for some minutes, looking out on the hills of the opposite side of the Hudson River. The river twined its way toward the great metropolis, lying bathed in moonlight like a great white serpent between the shadows of the hills.

"The irony of fate," he muttered. "Nothing that man does diverts the hand of fate." An indescribable feeling of awe crept into his heart. The next moment it was gone. "Show him in," he said, turning to his secretary. His heavy jaw set and the thick, square shoulders straightened up.

In a moment Cosgrove came in. He wore a gray suit, the coat buttoned up quite to his narrow black tie, and broad heavy shoes. He carried a light overcoat on his arm, but laid it, together with his hat, on a chair near the door.

"Hello, Hunter!" he said as he advanced into the room. He did not give the Chief Executive any title. His face was flushed and the eyes a trifle blood-shot. He smelled strongly of alcohol, though

his speech was clear and his gait steady. "The press in New York is raising hell," he began without further ceremony. "There are extras being issued every hour. Hunter, you are up against the game of your life."

"What has that to do with you?" Hunter asked calmly. He stepped to his desk in the center of the room and rested one hand on its polished top. "I'll play the game out, as I have every other game I ever tackled," he aded, as Cosgrove did not answer at once.

Cosgrove stepped close to him. So close that the odor of alcohol on his breath made Hunter wince.

"It has all to do with me and you," he answered slowly, with his deep set, blood-shot eyes fixed on Hunter's face. "It has taken five years for me to get a chance to get at you. It is here now."

He moistened his lips with his tongue.

"Go on," Hunter said.

"I'm going on, all right. You are in a great hurry, are you not? You were in no such hurry when we begged and begged you to let up on a woman whom you sent to hell because you wanted to show off your own virtues. Well, I'll tell you what I'm here for. I know where your Senator is. I can produce him in twenty minutes. But, by God, you won't get him until you make good on what I want!"

Hunter's eyes glistened.

"Go on, Cosgrove," he said, with at last a note

of venom in his voice. "I might have known some damned ginmill keeper would do me a trick. Tell me. What's your price ——"

"I am a damned ginmill keeper, all right," Cosgrove said slowly, though the great muscular body crouched a trifle as he said it; and the heavy eyebrows drew together over the bridge of his nose. "Yes, I am a damned ginmill keeper, but I have you, the Governor of the Empire State, where I want him, and I'll make you give up what I want before I leave this room."

Something way back in Hunter's early life rose in him like a flash; it made him forget his ambitions, the years of labor he had devoted to achieving what he now saw slipping away from him. He saw only the crouched figure before him, the ominous blood-shot eyes, the menacing jaw. He sprang at Cosgrove like a wild beast, blind to everything except the desire to destroy this Nemesis which now came to destroy him.

In the next instant he was bent back over the edge of his desk with Cosgrove's weight pressing him slowly backward, and the heavy odor of alcohol overwhelming his faculties. In another moment Cosgrove let him go.

"Hunter," Cosgrove said calmly,—his breathing was even, though the flush on his face had given way to a grayish pallor,—"that's the one sporty thing I have ever seen you do. Don't do it again. It's bad for both of us." He waited for Hunter to regain

his composure, though he watched him narrowly. "Listen to me," he began again. "Your entire political career depends upon what you do in the next few minutes. There is no time to lose. What I want is a small thing to you. I watched this proposition very closely. Last night after the caucus I picked up your man from Erie at the end of the street where he left his friends. I have known him for years. He's as rotten as hell. I got him drunk. He's drunk now. I got drunk with him. I'm drunk now. He is concealed where you and your entire police force can't get at him. I would drink him into hell, and myself with him, rather than lose what I have been waiting for all these months and years."

"We'll see," Hunter cried suddenly. "I have you in my power." He darted toward the bell on his desk.

Cosgrove intercepted his hand with a quick grasp of his heavy hand.

"Don't, Hunter," he admonished gravely. "Listen another moment. Do you think that I worked alone?" he went on, with his grasp still on Hunter's wrist. "Would it interest you to know that Bessam worked with me? Yes, the millionaire Bessam worked with a damned ginmill keeper. Bessam has hold of your man now. He will not give him up until I tell him to. I can afford to wait here until the vote is taken. Then you can go as far as you like."

"Release my hand," Hunter said. He was deathly pale. "What is it you want?" he asked, after a few

moments of silence, during which Cosgrove lighted a cigar, the end of which he spat on the carpet.

"Issue the Helmar pardon and your loyal Senator from Erie will be in his seat in half an hour."

Hunter rang the bell. The secretary came in.

"Bring me the papers in the Helmar case," he ordered. Then he sat down at his desk and wrote the pardon order. Cosgrove stuck it in his pocket, gathered up his hat and coat, and without further ceremony left the room.

Half an hour later the Senator from Erie county entered, somewhat unsteadily, the Senate chamber. An hour later the vote was recorded. The Senator from Erie voted by a nod of his head; his sense of speech was not yet trustworthy.

Cosgrove sent a telegram to Boonton. Then he and Bessam climbed wearily into an open motor car and drove many times around the city park before they were sober.

CHAPTER XVI

BOONTON took Cosgrove's telegram into the warden's office. The warden held a yellow slip of paper in his hand as Boonton came in.

"I have a message from Albany myself," he said, as Boonton handed over the telegram. "I think perhaps you had better tell her yourself. It is a privilege we do not often have here—one all of us would like to exercise. However, I will resign it in your favor."

Boonton thanked him with his eyes. Then he made his way down the long corridor, out over the cement-covered courtyard, and up in the lift to the operating-room in the hospital building. The lift operator greeted him with a smiling face. News travels very swiftly by mysterious means in a prison, to which the various methods of distributing the Morse dots and dashes are comparative sluggards. The woman in the white gown and cap met Boonton as he stepped out of the lift car.

"The doctors worked late to-day," she said. She had a single red rose at her corsage. The rose stem had bent downward, and as Boonton looked at the drooping flower the woman lifted it with the palm of her hand and touched its petals with her cheek.

She led the way to the operating-room and held the door open as he went in. Then she turned back and disappeared into her little office next to the lift shaft.

The Helmar woman did not look up when Boonton came in. She was polishing a nickelplated watercock at a large white enameled sink. Her arms were bare, and as she worked the muscles moved under the skin like ripples on the surface of a pond lightly disturbed by a vagrant wind puff. The left forearm was marred by long streaks of pale pink, where the grafts had been taken, for the scalded laundress.

It was very close in the room. A section of the skylight in the roof was raised, through which a faint breath of November air stole in. As the door closed a stronger current of air entered the opening, blowing a strand of hair across her eyes. She raised her scarred forearm to brush it back. As she lifted her head her eyes met Boonton's.

"Good-evening, Mr. Boonton," she said in the flat toneless voice of the convict.

"You have had a hard day, Miss Helmar," he said.

He stepped toward her and rested his deformed hand on the edge of the sink.

"No. I am not easily fatigued," she answered. She went on rubbing the watercock.

"Your pardon is granted," Boonton said, almost in a whisper.

The busy hands ceased their labor. She stepped

back one short quick step. The rag fell to the floor. A grayish pallor spread over her face and lost itself in the white skin of her neck between the folds of her hospital kerchief. The dark blue eyes held rigid for a moment, the pupils dilated widely. The next instant she looked down at the tiled floor at her feet.

"Come," he said gently. "Come, look up. See the stars." He pointed up at the sky through the open skylight overhead. "Do not look down."

She stooped down and picked up the rag.

"So many years of this," she said, with a bare note at variance with the prison quality in her voice. "So many, many, years of this!" She held the rag toward him. "Almighty God, have I wiped it out at last?"

"Yes, it is wiped out," Boonton answered very softly, as though in telling it no one but she need hear.

She brushed the rag along the edge of the sink where a stain marred the white enamel. It seemed quite tenacious, and she passed the rag over it again and again. The stain still stayed.

"That is quite sunken into the enamel," she said, with a troubled look in her eyes. The added note had disappeared from her voice. "It will not come out." She rubbed the spot very hard, bending over toward the sink. The pallor of the face extended to her ears, yet the spot remained rebelliously manifest. Boonton watched her silently. "Surely it must come out," she muttered. Her breath came fast and hard,

Suddenly her hand dropped to her side. "No, it is quite sunken in," she said, with a wail in her voice. "It won't come out."

"Leave it alone," Boonton said. "Leave it for someone else. You need not try any more to remove it."

"No, it will never come out entirely. It will always be there," she answered. She rested her hand with the crumpled rag on the edge of the sink. Her hair had become matted to her damp forehead.

Boonton came close beside her, and placed his deformed hand on her arm.

"Come and let me show you the stars," he pleaded, turning her slowly about. "See how bright they are. You will go out under them soon. Leave the stain as it is. Time will make it less."

She took his deformed hand in both of hers, together with the rag.

"For one brief moment," she began in her toneless voice again, "I thought that all was well. For one brief instant my mind lived an eternity. If never again I have a peaceful moment I will not begrudge the hardship of it all since I have known the moment when you told me I was free. I will ever know that I had that moment because you made it for me. All my life I will have that thought in my heart. It will go with me perhaps to my ultimate destination, with my soul, and dim the stain that goes with it. It is through no fault of yours that the stain remains; it is with me, and always will be."

She released his hand and carefully folded the rag into a small square and stuck it in her waist.

"I want to see the stars," she began again. As though some lost, vibrant, 'cello note had found its way in through the open skylight and crept into her heart, to be given back by her voice, did her words come now through her pallid lips. She held her scarred arm toward the patch of starlit sky. "I want to hear the life in the woods, to see again the sea, the trees, the snow, the clouds, the rain, the sunshine, the fields, and all there is. I want again to wander afar, though as I see it all, my mark goes with me." The vibrant vagrant note in her voice died, and she dropped her head. "At first," she went on with again the prison intonation in her speech, "for the first years I was a coward. I wanted these walls to be the scene of my expiation. No thought except that lived in my mind. Then you came, and soon the world began again. Yes, show me the stars. Put your poor hand on my shoulder as you point them out. Send me out under them with the memory in my heart that I see them because of you."

Boonton stopped her with a gesture.

"When you leave here you will take with you a new hope, born, not of myself, but of what God placed within yourself. I would not have you forget your mark. It is a part of your destiny. If I had thought you less mindful of it I would not have tried for your release. If I had not seen what God

placed within you I would not have tried. Go forth, then poor, poor child. Carry your mark as best you can. You are yet pale. You do not yet see what is before you. See how your hands shake, strong and wonderful as you are. Come, give me your rag. I will throw it away."

He reached out his hand.

"No," she answered. "Let me have it. You do not understand. I want to take it with me."

She turned slowly toward the door. On the threshold she turned back.

Boonton had put his deformed hand in the pocket of his coat. He bent his head as he met her eyes. His lips moved, though no sound escaped them. She passed out into the corridor. A man in uniform opened the circuit at a switch in the hall obliterating the light in the operating-room. Boonton lifted his face to the open space in the skylight.

"God be merciful to her," he prayed, clasping his deformed fingers with his left hand.

She walked rapidly down the hallway. The lift operator stepped out of his car as she approached.

"The warden wants you to come to the office," he said. He stood aside for her to enter the car. "I will take you down," he added, as she hesitated. It was the first sign of her freedom, for convicts are not permitted to use the lift.

The warden rose from his chair as she came into the office. He opened the little iron gate which separated his private office from the main room.

"Come in, please, Miss Helmar," he addressed her. He stood aside as she entered. "Sit down, please." He waved his hand at a chair close to his desk. "I have a message here from Albany," he went on. "You are already acquainted with its nature." He picked the yellow slip of paper from his desk. "The necessary papers will not arrive for a few days. Until they do I cannot officially regard you as removed from the custody of the State. However, this need be no great hardship. I fancy you will have to make some arrangements with respect to your toilet." He let his eyes pass over the convict garb she wore, though this seemed less harsh, softened as it was by the Geneva brassard on her sleeve and the white kerchief at the neck, the symbol of her special office in the great prison. "You will be relieved from duty at once," he added.

"I do not desire that," she answered. "I would prefer to remain on duty until I leave,"

"I respect this in you. However, you are really free, and I prefer to have you devote the last few days of your stay here to making certain necessary arrangements. Your financial affairs have been, as you know, taken care of by Mr. Stratford. He will be here in the morning."

The warden stopped for a moment, but the woman remained silent.

"Convicts," he began again, "sent to me for definite periods are in a position to accumulate certain amounts of money which is credited them in return

for extra work they do while here. As yours was a life sentence, of course no such provision was made in your case. This, fortunately for you, makes no difference, as Mr. Stratford informs me."

He paused and fumbled the yellow slip of paper in his fingers.

The woman did not answer. She sat quite still, looking down at the rug on the floor, an attitude convicts always assume when in repose. It was very still in the room, the silence only broken by the sputter of the log fire in the grate and the ticking of a large clock on the wall between the windows. The warden waited for some time in silence, but she still remained silent with her hands folded in her lap and her eyes fixed on the floor.

"You are a young woman yet," the warden resumed. "Let me see." He consulted a paper lying on his desk. "You were thirty-one when you came here. That makes you thirty-six." He brushed his hand through his gray hair. "That is a young woman. You have much of your life before you." He stopped speaking and looked thoughtfully out of the window where the moonlight was causing a bare tree to throw queer shadows on the lawn. "I have had many people come and go," he said with a queer hesitation in his speech, "in the twenty-five years of my office here. At first I sent each one off with an admonition, with a hope expressed that their lives might formulate themselves along lines other

than those which led them here. As time went on I gradually began to believe that I had no right to burden persons who had paid for what they had done with my directions. Latterly I have abandoned the measure. Your case has been of great interest to me. Your crime was a peculiar one, one which had its origin in the greatest emotion known to man—and greater yet in woman. For this reason I would ask you to let me give you my best wishes for your future. My occupation has not dulled an appreciation of human effort. I do not rise to the dramatic pose of saying you have been a ministering angel in this unfortunate sphere. We do not have angels come here. Yet, too, I would have you know that I am aware of the patient, persistent effort you have made to lessen the burden of the afflicted under our care. Apply to the world or those in it the same gentle helping efforts and you will not have lived for nothing. I ask you, too, to accept my thanks for your work. My sick and injured will miss you very much. I am old enough a man to say to you that I will miss your presence here, though I have been compelled to withhold until this moment any expression of mindfulness of your work. God has made you beautiful. He has not entirely withdrawn His hand from you. I will not keep you any longer. You may go."

She rose, with her eyes still directed to the floor. The warden held the gate open for her to pass out.

As she stepped by him he put his hand under her chin and pushed her face upward. She looked steadily into his eyes. He let her go on.

"They forget how to cry here," he muttered. He lighted a cigar and puffed it in silence for a few minutes. Then he pressed an annunciator button at the side of his desk. A clean, well-groomed clerk stepped in. "Get me the rest of the papers in the Helmar case," he ordered. "Also present my compliments to Mr. Boonton, and ask him to join me in a game of chess to-night."

Three days later Marie Helmar left the prison. Stratford had a long interview with her the day before in the warden's little reception room, and informed her of the condition of her affairs. Fortunately her financial position involved no hardship. In the end he had offered to wait over and escort her to New York. This offer Miss Helmar refused, on the ground that she did not wish to cause him any embarrassment traveling in her company, a conception at which Stratford rebelled, but accepted as perhaps most consistent.

Boonton had not obtruded himself upon her since the interview in the operating-room, but just before leaving she sent for him, asking him to bid her good-by.

She was seated in the corridor on a long wooden bench when Boonton appeared. For an instant he did not recognize the woman in the dead black gown

and quite thick veil, as the one he had seen so long in the garb of a convict. She rose as he came toward her, holding out a neatly gloved hand, which Boonton took in his own great rawboned fist. She wore a fur collar and well-fitting boots, the latter making her appear much taller than the low-heeled prison footwear she had discarded. She did not raise her veil. The corridor was quite dark, and what light there was came from the door. She had her back to the light, which Boonton faced as he stood before her.

The doorman announced the arrival of the hack which had been summoned from the railroad station, and as he opened the door a breath of fresh cool air blew into the hallway, slightly ruffling Boonton's red cowlick.

"You are going back to New York, Mr. Stratford tells me," Boonton said, in his steady quiet voice. He was a trifle paler than usual, but other than this he betrayed no emotion in his thin, clean-cut face.

"Yes, Mr. Boonton," she answered. She held her head slightly bent forward and now folded her hands, holding them before her like a child who is embarrassed before a stranger.

"Mr. Stratford has arranged for a small apartment for me," she added, as Boonton made no effort to speak.

"I may come to see you, perhaps?" he asked.

"I feared to ask you to come," she replied, with

her head still held down. She picked at a thread which protruded from the end of the finger of her glove. "I knew you would if I asked you, yet, I wanted you only to come if you wanted to. I will send you my address. This will give you time to think before you promise to come."

"You'll have to start if you want that train," the doorman called from the door.

The warden stepped out of his office. "Good-by," he said simply. He held out his hand. She took it in hers for an instant, and turned slowly toward the door. The doorman touched his cap as she passed out. The two men watched her climb into the rickety hack. It had begun to snow. As she went out a few impudent flakes stole into the corridor through the door and died an early death.

As Miss Helmar stepped into the hack quite a drive of snowflakes were blown into the fur around her neck. The spavined hack horse started lamely forward. She did not shiver, but sat quite erect in the seat, a little forward from the back rest, with her head bent forward. She sat thus until the station was reached. The hackman took her bag, though she dismounted unaided.

The sun had sunk quite low in the west, only heralding its presence by a faint pink haze near the horizon, and darkness crept steadily in. She waited patiently at the edge of the platform until the train pulled in. The snow increased, and already a thick layer covered the tops of the waiting station wagons


and collected on the backs of the horses. The locomotive throbbed and sputtered as it slid by, following slowly behind the streak of light from the head lamp. A porter took her bag and preceded her to a seat in a drawing-room car. He placed her bag beside her, hung up her fur collar and left her alone. She sat on the edge of the chair with her hands folded in her lap and her head held down. A drop of melted snow fell to her lap. She watched the reflection of the lights from the roof of the car in the clear water, though this soon disappeared into the cloth of her skirt.

The train lunged on. A childish voice caused her to look up. "The lady is crying," it said.

There were only three other passengers in the car, a middle-aged man who sat near the front entrance, a young woman in a purple gown, and the owner of the voice, a little girl of perhaps seven, who, together with the woman she called mamma, occupied chairs opposite that of Miss Helmar.

"Be still, dear," the mother admonished the child. "You must not speak of that sort of thing. It's not nice."

As Miss Helmar raised her head a miniature shower of melted snowflakes fell to her shoulders. Her hat was quite wet, and now a tiny stream of water flowed from its edge. She removed the hat and veil and laid them on the floor beside her near the window, and turned her chair facing toward it. The train lurched around a curve, throwing her



backward against the soft upholstery of the chair. She did not bend forward again, but placed the elbow toward the car on the arm of the chair, allowing the black gloved hand to rest against her cheek. She sat thus for some time watching the snow drive against the window pane.

The little girl came toward her. Her mother had gone to sleep. She crept quite close.

"Tell me," she asked, taking hold of Miss Helmar's arm with her tiny fingers, "why do you cry?"

"I am not crying. That was water from the snow on my hat you saw."

"Then you are not sorry for someone?" the child persisted. She stuck her pert little face around Miss Helmar's forearm and looked up into her face. "You wear black. They only wear black when somebody is dead. Is somebody dead?"

"No. No one is dead. I am not sorry for anyone. You must not speak to me. Mother would not like it."

"Oh, yes, she would. Mother is very nice. She lets me talk to everybody. Yes, everybody except to bad people, and you are not bad."

"Come, dear," the mother cried, "you must not annoy the lady." She had awakened suddenly and now leaned forward, beckoning to the child.

"Please tell her I do not bother you," the child plead. "We came through from Chicago. It is awful dull on the train."

Miss Helmar did not answer. She continued to stare out of the window at the driving, whirling snow.

The child continued to look at her face with gathering wonder in her eyes. Then she stole back to her seat and sat very still, looking at the black glove which quite concealed the face of the woman she had addressed. Soon the child fell asleep, with her curly head lopped over to one side and the two little legs stuck out straight before her like a doll in a toy-shop window. The minutes sped on. After a time the porter came in. He placed a hassock at Miss Helmar's feet. She put one foot on it. The other she rested on the floor. Other than this she did not move.

"First call for dinner!" the porter called from the door. He approached Miss Helmar. "There are very few passengers," he said. "You better go in now if you want to eat. We get a crowd at Albany sometimes."

"I do not care to eat," she answered.

The porter went out. Presently the woman and the child rose and left. Soon the middle-aged man passed out toward the dining-car. Miss Helmar continued to stare out of the window at the snow. The train drove on through the storm.

At Albany the snow turned into rain. Big blotches pattered against the window, tiny streams of water working queer streaks. A dapper-looking man in the early thirties came in. He took a chair

quite opposite Miss Helmar. He carried a goodly-sized suitcase marked with a silver monogram. He removed his storm coat and hung it, together with his hat, on the rack over his chair, opened the suitcase, extracted a novel with a colored picture on its cover,—a girl in a tennis suit and an impossibly posured tennis raquet in her hand,—and proceeded to read.

The train started after another engine had been hooked up. The snowstorm had caused some delay and the engine driver pushed his throttle up notch after notch until his steel monster crashed through the storm at terrific speed. The man with the novel did not seem to be interested in his book. Several times he laid it down and scrutinized the woman in the black gown with the gloved hand resting against her cheek. Presently he rose and made his way to the smoker. He reappeared very soon, however, though on his return he did not catch a glimpse of the woman's face.

He was a good-looking, well-groomed chap, with carefully parted hair and smooth skin. He wore a conventional tweed traveling suit and tan gloves. The middle-aged man and the woman with the little girl had not yet returned from the dining-car.

"You are traveling alone, madam," the man said suddenly. "May I offer you my book? You will perhaps not find it very interesting, but I thought I could be of service to you."

He stood beside her chair and looked at the gloved hand.

The woman did not move.

"I never read novels," she answered; "thank you, sir." She could see the man's reflection in the window pane.

The man sat down. Something in the woman's voice gave him the impression he had best not try further. The "sir," too, made a peculiar impression on him. When he arrived home that night he tried to tell his mother about it, but could not quite convey the idea. He gave it up soon however. Some years later he heard Rejane do Tolstoy's "Maslova." At the end of the play the incident came into his mind. He had no idea why. If he had told Rejane about it she would have thanked him with more grace than she would have for the biggest bouquet of flowers ever handed across the footlights, though he would not have known why she did.

Soon he went again into the smoker, though this time he finished his cigar and several after it, and only returned to his chair as the train pulled into the station in New York. Nor did he wait for the woman to get up before he left the car, but stood on the platform with his bag in his hand ready to alight as the train came to a halt.

Miss Helmar put her hat and veil on without recourse to a mirror, and let the porter help her on with the fur collar. Her bag she took herself, de-

clining his aid. All the passengers had disembarked when she stepped to the platform, and she walked slowly toward the exit alone. A few passengers were still chatting with friends who had met them at the concourse, and behind the little group she caught a glimpse of Stratford's tall, square-shouldered figure. He removed his hat as she approached and held out his hand in greeting. The glare of the engine headlight shone full on his face, enhancing the livid red of the scar on his cheek and made glittering streaks in his gray hair.

She smiled faintly into his eyes and walked beside him to the street, where Katherine's limousine was waiting. Stratford gave the driver his direction, and got in beside her. She sat quite huddled up in the corner of the car, with her head still bent forward, quite unmindful of the bunch of lilies of the valley in the flowerholder back of the driver's seat.

Neither spoke. Soon the motor stopped before a quiet-looking apartment house near Central Park. Stratford handed her the little bouquet of flowers.

"A greeting from my wife," he said, speaking for the first time. "You will find your rooms ready. The elevator boy will show you," he added, as he helped her to dismount.

She inclined her head and touched the flowers with her lips. Stratford watched her disappear into the lift. Then he re-entered the waiting car and drove off.

CHAPTER XVII

BESSAM drove down to Cosgrove's ginmill once a week. Cosgrove always appeared promptly on the minute when Bessam's car was scheduled to arrive. The pair then drove out into the country to a little inn overlooking the Hudson, where they dined, usually quite undisturbed. When coffee was served Bessam always went through the same ritual.

"Well, Cosgrove, what do I get bled for to-night?" he would ask, as he lighted his cigar.

"The doctor was in to see me yesterday," Cosgrove would answer. "The fellow I told you about some time ago is ready for his artificial leg, the doctor tells me. His boss will put up twenty-five. I'll put up ten, you can come up with the rest." Or, "You might drop in at B——'s and send an overcoat for a ten-year-old boy to this address." Or perhaps, "One of my kike families has the old man laid up in the hospital. It wouldn't hurt you to have your grocer fix up a basket of grub for them."

Bessam would put the address into his vest pocket and the next day the thing was done.

If a plea was for cash Bessam always counted it out in new perfectly unwrinkled banknotes, which Cosgrove stowed away in a flat wallet, so that they would not be marred on the way to their destination.

Neither the man with the artificial leg nor the

family with the filled stomachs, nor the boy with the overcoat, nor indeed many such, ever knew that a portly, bald-headed old steel magnate was responsible for their happiness, and this through a ginmill keeper.

One bleak, raw February afternoon Bessam seemed a trifle ill at ease as they drove over the ruts in the macadam road leading along the river. Cosgrove noted the change in his manner, but said nothing.

"Cosgrove," Bessam began suddenly, "you know I am not what they call a diplomat. Diplomacy is too often a cloak for pushing along a crooked game. In my business I had others do that sort of thing, but I never was worth a damn at it with my friends. I want to ask you something."

He stopped and chewed very hard on the end of his cigar.

"Go ahead. Out with it," was Cosgrove's answer.

"Boonton is coming down to-night to dine with us. I would like to have you there. Will you come?"

"Yes."

"Thank you, Cosgrove," Bessam said. He actually had a lump in his throat. They drove on in silence for a while. "We could go on a little farther than usual to-day and go right home to dinner," Bessam began again. "You know Boonton does not bring any evening clothes with him and so you would not have to go home first."

Cosgrove nodded his head.

The car pulled up at the inn. "I want to phone Katherine you're coming," Bessam explained as he dismounted. Entering the car again, they retraced their way, to Bessam's and dinner.

Katherine sat between Cosgrove and Boonton. Her figure had filled out again, though the refinement of expression which come to all who have gone through darkness into the light had displaced the indolence which was so marked a few years before. She was genuinely glad to see Cosgrove, and placed him at once at ease with the art inherent in her sex.

Bessam was in high fettle, and Stratford was a close second in making his former political associate comfortable. Boonton of course maintained his usual unobtrusive demeanor. After dinner the men adjourned to Bessam's library, where coffee was served.

"Cosgrove," Stratford said suddenly, "that's a pretty decent thing of you to go and see Miss Helmar. I did not know it until yesterday. It leaked out quite accidentally. She tells me that you have been very kind to her."

"I haven't been any more decent than Bessam," Cosgrove answered, with a laugh. "He trots himself over to her about once a week and makes a call."

"Well, between an ex-convict and a ginmill keeper I certainly have troubles enough," was Bessam's characteristic answer.

"I was glad to see you go down in your pocket for

those roses you sent her at Christmas," Cosgrove went on, with a twinkle in his eye. "American beauties, at about twenty-five fine American dollars a dozen. Great stuff! After a while you'll make good for some of the sins of your early life, Bessam."

"Oh, rot!" Bessam retorted quickly. "It wasn't any more than your tramping around with her on Christmas Eve buying a cartload of toys for a lot of your Jew kids."

"How is she?" Boonton asked, with a little moisture in his eyes.

Neither of the elder men answered.

"She is the most patient, placid thing I ever saw," Stratford said, after a few moments of silence. "I go to see her in the capacity of her man of affairs at intervals and ——"

"You do like hell!" Bessam broke in. "You go there and walk her along the Park roads, whenever you get a chance. I knew it all the time. Jim, you are a lovable liar."

"I wonder if she would see me, if I tried?" Boonton asked.

"You'll never know until you try, you glorious chump," Bessam answered.

"We'll excuse you," Cosgrove added, as Bessam stopped to puff his cigar. "You sit there like a bump on a log. Go ahead."

Boonton left the room without another word. He found Miss Helmar in her little sitting-room, a

somewhat plainly furnished chamber. A plain dark rug covered the floor, a piano stood in one corner of the room, and several stiff-backed chairs stood about. An excellent copy of Gabriel Max's "Christ as a Physician" engraved by Schlecht hung on the wall over the piano. A color reproduction of Neuville's "La Bourget" and a marine by Seward, together with several small photographs, covered the rest of the wall space, except between the windows, where was hung a Madonna by Kaulbach. A round mahogany table with a bronze electric lamp topped by a red silk shade stood in one corner of the room. Beside this was a slender mahogany chair with a cane seat.

Miss Helmar stood beside the table as Boonton came in. A wicker work-basket, together with a circular stretcher holding some partly finished needlework, lay at the base of the lamp. She held a silken thread looped through a needle in her hand, but stuck the needle into a little cushion fastened at the side of the work-basket as Boonton advanced into the room.

She wore a perfectly plain black gown, the collar of which was of the same material as the gown itself. As she bent down to place the needle into the cushion the light from the lamp fell on her thick dark hair and wonderfully made hands.

"I have only now the courage to come to see you," Boonton said, with his quiet voice.

She took his hat and coat and hung them on the

rack in the hall, moving with the peculiar accuracy and strength of the workwoman.

"I have waited for you to come," she answered as she came back into the room.

She pushed a chair toward him. He bade her to sit down herself. She sat on the edge of the straight-backed mahogany chair, with its cane seat, and looked down at the rug at her feet.

"You still look down," Boonton said gently. "You must not do that. Let me see you rest against the back of your chair."

She did not move, nor did she answer.

They sat opposite each other thus for some minutes while the little brass clock on the mantel ticked and ticked. The February wind drove some rain-drops against the windows.

"They have built a great hospital at Seoul in Corea," Boonton began. "There is much to be done for these afflicted people. I am going out there. I can offer you the devotion of the rest of my life, if you will come."

He put his deformed hand on his knee, where the light from the lamp fell directly on it. She rose slowly and came to the side of his chair.

"And they would let me work there?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered.

She sank to her knees beside him and rested her white, smooth cheek on his deformed hand.

"I will go," she said. "And perhaps I will learn to look up again."

Boonton raised her face until her eyes met his. Then he bent down and kissed her on the forehead.

A week later they started across the continent. Bessam, Cosgrove and Stratford went with them to the train. Boonton helped her into the railroad car with his deformed hand supporting the scarred forearm.

On the platform she turned back to wave her hand at the silent little group. The men lifted their hats. Stratford lifted his with his right hand. A ray of sunlight broke through the glass dome of the railroad shed, fought its way through the smoke and cinders and fell full on Stratford's marred cheek. He stood thus for a moment bareheaded, with a queer feeling in his heart.

"Christ was right," he muttered quite audibly. "He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone upon her."

Then he drove Cosgrove to his ginmill and went with Bessam to his granite pile.

THE END.











